JOHN DRAYTON;

BEING

A HISTORY OF THE EARLY LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT

OF

A LIVERPOOL ENGINEER.

"Every man for himself, and God for us all."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following story I have been encouraged to print, by observing the greater interest which the general world begins to take in the class of which it treats. The things which I have recorded I have seen, and it is only a plain story of true and common life which I am able to tell to the world; I tell it simply because it is true, and because the class among whom I

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have long lived and laboured are too comfortable to meet the eye of the benevolent, while, at the same time, they are too important in their individuality as working men, to be lost in the placid borders of the middle classes.

I am not a philosopher; neither am I a politician. In the north end of Liverpool here, where I have lived for more than ten years, I am known in various characters: professionally as a teacher, unprofessionally as the friend of a great many fathers of my pupils, and the counsellor of some. Respectful people think me a poor gentleman; disrespectful, a man who, having succeeded in no other trade, has taken up teaching as a last resource—there is a certain degree of truth in both surmises—while the great bulk of my acquaintances, who do not care for me

sufficiently to trouble themselves with conjectures, know me only as Mr. Mitchell, the teacher at St. George's School.

But I am not either the sole or the principal teacher at St. George's School; I am altogether a supernumerary man, receiving a salary certainly, like the rest, from "the young master" at the foundry, but my duties are not constant, like those of my good, perplexed, laborious friend, Mr. Birch. I teach Latin (which Mr. Birch thinks supremely absurd) to a very select class of boys who seem to have heads, and manifest an inclination for more learning than their neighbours, and arithmetic to the whole school. Besides this, I have evening classes for mathematics and French, and sometimes lecture on the natural sciences to the young engineers, who turn out in considerable numbers to hear me,

and greatly like the idea of wandering out on the summer nights with geological hammers and botanic cases, but I never find that they bring me many specimens.

I am not quite an old man, but I am grey-haired and elderly, and, what is worse, alone; but, to tell the truth, I like my solitary room, and am quite content with my old bachelorship, though my landlady pities me audibly, and her pretty daughter laughs, as I can hear sometimes when her sweetheart comes to see her at night, at "poor old Mr. Mitchell." But I establish myself comfortably in my arm-chair, while my feet repose upon another, and return, with as much good-humour as Mary Helen uttered it, this laugh, feeling very sensibly that there are delights in freedom, and that it is, beyond dispute, in one's own parlour, a noble thing.

In my day I have wandered about a good deal, and have so much experience of the world and its ways, and only so much, as my years of necessity bring. There are unconnected chapters here and there in my own history, which I sometimes think are as interesting as the books I read out of the library now and then; but as I have almost always been a passive man, observing more than doing, the chances are, I dare say, that few people would find the interest in them which I do myself. One's recollections of other people, if one has a vivid memory, become a sort of stock for private reading—they do to me at least—wherein, having the pleasure of authorship and reading combined to myself, I should sometimes like very well to give some friend a share.

This passive, observant tendency of mine, having little to do at home, has spread itself rather profusely perhaps over this district, which I appropriate and call mine. No one has begun to map out its geography yet, or classify its inhabitants, its Flora, its Fauna, its rocks and its stratifications. It is yet an undiscovered territory, I think, except to statistical people and myself, its Columbus; so with permission of those who love the study of humanity, I shall endeavour, with my lantern, to show them the foundry, down yonder, very near which is the scene of my labours, and the little pleasant streets upon this hill of Everton, where I and many of my clients dwell.

To return to myself for a moment, that my friends who come to look at my district with me, may first look at their

guide. I have not been a teacher always —I was once young—and neither have I always been alone. Recollect I don't quarrel with my solitude; quite the reverse. I am a single gentleman, as my landlady says, or an old bachelor, if you prefer Mary Helen's phrase, young lady, quite as much from choice as necessity, though I will say that necessity helped to decide the matter, lest your look of pity glide into scorn. But this old bachelor is a very gentle animal sometimes, and sometimes, away from that rude, daily contact which dulls the ideal sense, may keep the poetic heart fresher and purer than a richer man. Believe so, young friend, as the lanthorn shows you first, what you might see without it in this twilight, a face which, like the hair over its brow, is grey, and a figure which never was commanding. I

am a little man, as some great men have been, and have not about me a superfluous ounce which a Shylock could appropriate; my hair is not very grey—that is to say, the black predominates so much over the white, that nothing of the glory of silver hair is on my head. My hat is not on it either, since all this time I stand uncovered, that you may satisfy yourself of my appearance before you take me for your guide; but I am so old as to fear catching cold now. Everything about me is grey—a quiet, unromantic, neutral hue—safe, and to be trusted, if not very attractive; so give me your hand, young visitor, and let me put on my hat.

Or shall I show you my room? When I am thinking, and take to pacing it as I do sometimes, it is just five steps long, from the window here, by the side of the

sofa, to this little chiffonier at the opposite wall, and my steps are not the steps of a giant. Three paces from the door carries me into my little fire-place; but my landlady must not hear you call it small; and Mary Helen hovers in the passage, I know, to wonder and catch a glimpse, if she can, of old Mr. Mitchell's visitors; but look into the corner there at my books, and never mind Mary Helen.

You think I have not many books? it is very true; but I have a great library open to me—a library great in extent, which cannot help having capital books, however little its readers care for them; and so, except some old familiar friends which I think of as positive human existences rather than as books, I never get any. When I speak thus, you are not to think that I want to make you believe that

I could buy books if I wanted them. Not so, for good books are not to be bought by light purses like mine. But never mind, I read them, and do not enjoy the book a morsel less because it comes out of the library.

Now you are ready?—for indeed there is little to see in my room—and we will go to look at my country, which is no dream country in the clouds, I must have you understand, but a real mortal land, with the heavens over it, and the groaning earth beneath, full of light hearts and heavy hearts — of troubles and temptations — of solemn life and death. One thing it differs in from those human provinces which lie in a warmer temperature — not nearer God's sun, which shines upon all— but nearer the sun of fortune. Here, these brothers and sisters of ours lose sight of

little imaginary troubles in the labour which is their lot; evil must be real which gets at their hearts through the work which keeps them busy. They have no time for the head-aches of the mind; fevers and cruel *accidents* — what we call accidents — with here and there a deadly, lingering, slow consumption: these are the maladies to which, almost exclusively, the bodies and souls in my dominion are subject, so that it is not easy to make stories out of them, and you must think of this when you see the strong forms, and hear the slow speech of my engineers.

Now I had intended saying a great deal more about them before we set out—how they live, and how they think; what they must do for themselves, and what other people may do for them—but I am standing at the door all this time with my hat in

my hand, afraid of catching cold, and Mary Helen, listening curiously, lingers somewhere in the dark in the passage behind me. Mary Helen's sweetheart is an engineer. If I venture to say that the race is not immaculate, she will be greatly indignant. I have put my hat on; my lanthorn is lighted; give me your hand now, and let us go away.

W. M.

SEACOMBE STREET, EVERTON.

CHAPTER I.

"DON'T stay past nine—there's a good lad: for, Johnnie, you'll be far away to-morrow."

So said John Drayton's mother as he and Charlie Smith, a young engineer from Liverpool, set out from her cottage door. Mrs. Drayton had her best gown on, and a cap with red ribbons; but notwithstanding looked very sad and troubled, and lifted, now and then, her apron to her eyes;

for John—good, honest, simple John, her only child, was to leave her, for the first time, to-morrow.

The two youths stood together in the garden without. Heavy, and large, and rustic, the country lad might have made two of the town one; but this physical disadvantage was counterbalanced by the far older intellect of the other. Glancing sharp in the quick dark eyes of Charlie, were the cleverness and smart activity of the town life in which he had been bred. His face was rather pale; his figure, spite of the sturdy foundry-work which had developed it, was rather active than strong; and as with due regard to those short crisp curls which clustered about his head, he placed his cap jauntily on one side of it, and inserted his thumbs into the pockets of his blue jacket, and called to John to

come along and not lose the fine evening, he was a very good specimen of his class; brisk, intelligent, and self-complacent, "up" to a great many things, and willing to take credit for a great many more.

Very different was John Drayton. His figure and strength were Herculean; his face ruddy, sheepish, and good-humoured, his great hands and feet the most unmanageable things in the world. Then his manner of speech was slow and rather coarse, and he had a propensity to hold down his head and laugh shy, rude laughs when strangers addressed him; nevertheless if you had patience enough to wait till the first fit of awkward silence was over, and to listen to the homely unmusical speech, there was sense in those slow words of John's. Two or three things the good pondrous fellow really knew, but

he "thought shame." They were a good contrast; the smart lad, with his smattering of knowledge and his assumption; the heavy good-humoured one blushing to acknowledge the little he did know.

They were about equal in years, and both stood upon the happy elevation of seventeen.

"Come along, Jack," said Charlie, "it's seven now in father's watch, and the sun's down, and look!—if yonder isn't the telegraph working; it must be some big ship; come along, Jack, and let's see."

They had to pass through the little Cheshire village of Upton, before reaching the hill on which stood the round tower of the telegraph. A dreamy, drowsy look this village had, clustered round the low square-towered Church, whose grave-yard,

green and fresh, rose high above the street, level with the cope-stone of the grey old wall which bounded it. A small, quiet public-house, with a quaint picture of bell-ringers for its sign, stood at the corner of the little street, and the scattered houses and long blank barns about, bore all of them visible marks of far descent. Here a foundation of ponderous stonework, supplemented and patched by the flimsy bricks of the present generation; there, an old-fashioned sharp-gabled house, with wisps of straw projecting from the little antique windows at the further end, and sad farm-yard litter, defiling a buttressed corner close upon the street. At the end of the village, upon a green swelling knoll, stood an old manorial house in good preservation, with a round-arched stone gateway defending its blooming garden, dating as

far back as that disastrous time when those innocent roses within were badges of deadly warfare. Between it and the village street, some fine trees interposed themselves, and the walls were rich with ivy. It formed a fine termination to the little quiet place, with its look of kindly authority—natural magistrate and patrician of the humble, small community below.

To this grange a large farm-yard was attached, through which the lads had to pass in their way to the hill. A great, wasteful, extravagant, dirty farm-yard with which a good agriculturist must have been in the horrors. There were masses of stuff accumulated to disgust there, which might, with a little care, have fertilized, the black unmanageable soil which you could see, here and there, peeping through scanty grass in the fields around. But

no one in Upton seemed to think of that; these heaps of manure, and nauseous pools of water, were time-honoured institutions in this wind-swept corner of the rich dairy county. He would have been a revolutionary who disturbed their peace.

Behind rose the low bleak hill crowned with its round tower, and bristling array of poles, and the huge black arms of the telegraph were busily working.

"Come along, Jack," urged Charlie Smith as he ran up the slope, "I never saw it working before; let's see how they do it."

In a very little time they had reached, climbing over rock and furze and dark slippery moss, the summit of the hill.

Before them, not very far away spread the broad sea, dimly stretching out to the horizon with gliding sails upon it, and

streams of smoke from the fast disappearing steamers, which sunk like ghosts, as you could think, one by one, into the depths below. At your left hand, the broad Dee carried into those gleaming silent waters all that it had to give, the breath and freshness of the hills; while at your right, the Mersey swept round yon other low projecting mount, making its busy footsteps echo far into the sea. And yonder lies the cloud of smoke, high chimneys, and church-spires, and clumsy domes, fantastically glancing through it here and there, that constantly marks the great bustling Liverpool, which is the heart of all this district; and between you and the sea spreads a flat expanse of green fields and hedge rows, with an occasional clump of trees, and pool of black shining water to relieve what else has no feature; and

below, sheltered and quiet, the village nestling round its grey church tower, looks like a place of homes.

"See, see, look!" cried Charlie Smith, "that will be the ship, that big one. She's got a signal at her mast-head; look at her how she's going! but what's the good of telegraphing now, when she'll be in directly?"

"She'll belong to that pole," said John Drayton, as he pointed to one from which a little flag was waving, "that's why they've got the colour up; and the man as owns that, owns the ship."

"Who needs to be told that, you big genius?" said his companion. "Wait till we have you over in the foundry, and then we'll brush you up a bit."

"I say, Charlie, father says there's five hundred men in the foundry!" exclaimed John with admiring wonder.

"Five hundred men? I should think there was, and more than that," responded Charlie, with careless superiority. "Why there's three or four hundred Scotchmen."

"Three or four hundred Scotchmen!" John had an idea that the resources of the country must be exhausted.

"There's one; such a clever chap—you should hear him speak; but I don't know what you would say to Robison. I dare say all your squires and rectors and good people would think he was the greatest scamp that ever was born."

John pricked up his ears. A great scamp, a very great one, was a new entity to the admiring rustic. He was curious to hear about it.

"What does he do, Charlie?" said John with visions of poaching and drinking, and brutal rural vice floating in his mind.

"Do? he doesn't do anything particular that I know of, except work in the foundry; but he might be a parliament man for his head, and if the people had their rights, he *would* be one soon enough *I* know. He's in Glasgow now; but when he comes back again, you'll say he's the grandest speaker you ever heard all your life."

"That wouldn't be hard," said John, "for I never did hear anybody speak but our vicar."

"Your vicar! a pretty sort of a man he'll be for an orator. You should hear what Robison says about them. It's all up with that sort of thing now, Jack, you may depend—men's not going to be kept down any more by a parcel of priests; and the vicar's a regular hum-

bug. You may go and tell him I said it."

"*You* said it?" said John with good-humoured wonder. "Why, Charlie, you don't think our vicar would care for *you?*"

"Wouldn't he though? we'll see about that some day," said Charlie, drawing himself up. "I don't care—that! for all the parsons that ever was born, and I'd speak my mind whatever they did, aye if they were all listening there this minute."

Larger opened the honest blue eyes of the astonished rustic; for what did the parsons care for the "mind" of Charlie Smith?

"What would they listen for?" said John innocently, "unless you wanted to talk to them special, Charlie. He's a

good man, is our vicar; the other ones—I don't care what they are—our one's a good one, I know—but you don't think they would stop to listen to you?"

"I'm every bit as good as them," said Charlie.

"Are you?" said John Drayton.

The good honest inarticulate fellow was puzzled a little. He himself was by no means on the same level as the old dignified vicar, he knew, and he did not in the least comprehend his friend's self-confidence; for John believed what was said to him unsuspectingly, and began to ponder with a little awe of Charlie, whether this could be true.

"But the telegraph's done working," said John, "and you hav'nt seen it after all."

"Never mind, I don't care for the telegraph now," said Charlie. "I wonder what right these men have to own big ships and loads of money, when we've got nothing?"

John only stared and kept silence, for envious thought—except on the first day when Sam Buttons made his appearance in a new smock-frock, and dazzled the whole village—had entered his mind never before.

So there was a considerable pause. Charlie Smith leaned over the walls before them with folded arms and bent brows; not that he meditated upon the discontented sentiment he had just spoken, for Charlie, like millions more, uttered seditions and doubts without having his own mind stirred in the smallest degree by the per-

plexities he affected; but he looked forth over the still sea, and at the faint sails on the horizon far away, suggesting the illimitable breadth of other seas beyond; and away along the line of dim blue hills, which whispered of the secret flowing of the full Dee between them and the eyes which traced their faint outline among the clouds. Vast was the scene, and it spoke of greater vastness; of long prolonged unending shores, of hidden rivers, broad and silent, of seas far off, tempting the restless voyager on and on for ever, and of the infinite beyond and over all. Something of stillness melted over the boy's heart; his shallow stream of thought ceased to babble of itself in the quiet hush and soft musical breathing of the summer night. Consciously small and humble, his spirit fell

back and bowed in presence of this silent greatness in the heavens and the earth, and the broad sea. Awe came upon him, and reverence—reverence and awe unhappily unusual. For a long time both were silent.

"I wonder," said Charlie at length, "if a man were sailing on and on as far as ever he could go, what he would come to at last?"

But John could not answer. It thrilled them into momentary gravity and silent wonder, to think of that mystery, marvellous and unfathomable — that dream of weird adventure far out upon the unknown seas.

The moon had risen before they descended the hill. The strong stir and motion of natural freedom had never before revealed

itself so strongly in the spirit of the town-bred lad. Yet, as they wandered home, and softened in the silvery air, the kind coarse voice of John Drayton's father came to them from the cottage door, calling them to return. Charlie did not resent the command as he would have done his own father's interference with his liberty. Here, so far away from the feverish license of the crowd, in pleasant harmony with the freedom of nature, was the kind authoritative voice: and the youth did homage unwittingly to the true and noble liberty of man.

Free as the planets are to move in majestic concord with the will of God — free as are the angels joyously to do well, and find their noblest liberty in obedience

—here it was shadowed forth, this Freedom; but far other seemed it, as the workshop orator painted the dishevelled outline of that profaned grand form, and the youthful foolish spirit knew it only as he saw it there.

CHAPTER II.

"I COULDN'T think of it at less than seven shillings a-week," said Mrs. Smith.

"Seven shillings,—why he won't make as much as that altogether," said Mrs. Drayton.

"Well, that's none of my concerns," was the response. "My Charlie has ten now, counting overtime, and if John likes to work, he'll soon get on; but to think of boarding a great lad like that at less than seven shillings!"

"He is a big fellow, bless him," said the mother, again lifting the apron to her eyes.

"And they'll have the top room all to themselves, Charlie and him, though I'm sure to be put about with the rest," said Mrs. Smith; "and I'll do my best to make him comfortable — but six-and-sixpence!—I couldn't think of it."

"He's to come home on Saturday nights," sighed the cottage mother; but Mrs. Smith was inflexible, and the contested sixpence was at length given up.

John Drayton's father was a labourer, and, of his class, almost the most comfortable in the village. The cottage he lived in was his own, and so was the large, luxuriant garden which surrounded it — a garden which did good service to its humble owners; for duly every Saturday, Mrs.

Drayton hied her to the great market in Liverpool, with her splendid cabbages, and cauliflowers, rhubarb, or gooseberries. It was years now since John began to rejoice in the prospect of crossing, with his mother, the busy river, and helping her in her simple merchandize; and in the pride of heart, consequent on the discovery that John could calculate to a penny all her receipts and profits in less time than she herself could add up dozen by dozen the number of cabbages she had sold, had John's fate been determined. It was not meet that he, their only child, whose education had cost the village schoolmaster so much manual labour, so many birches; and for whose future wealth the bowed trees yearly yielded fruit, and the cabbages matured into ripe beauty, should be but the ploughing, reaping rustic his father

was before him. These good people had been ambitious for their son; and Charlie Smith, the young engineer, was already, at seventeen, earning ten shillings a week.

So they resolved that John also should be an engineer; and now for a month or two, Mrs. Drayton had looked pathetically, with silent appealing eyes, upon those young, strong, blackened giants, pouring forth from the foundry-gates, as she passed. She used to single out, here and there, one, and think he was a good son, like her own John, and hesitate whether she should not speak to him, and beg him to be kind to her boy — her good, dutiful, honest boy. Mrs. Drayton's eyes overflowed, as she fancied how by-and-by he would stand among them, with his new white moleskin suit blackened like theirs,

and the marks of toil upon his manly face. There was an interest to her now in the ceaseless metallic clang, and blank rows of windows; and sometimes she paused to try whether it was possible to distinguish any one among the crowd of voices, swelling over the great din of those iron spirits that were created there. She never could succeed when all the tones were strange, but knew, most certainly, when he was there, she would distinguish John's.

Sometimes they made thirty shillings a week, those engineers—sometimes they grew to be great gentlemen; dimly these splendours shone upon the mind of the good mother, and she smiled, as with her unfailing apron she brushed the tears away.

But John's indentures were signed, and

Mrs. Smith's terms for his board accepted. She had packed his box with abundance of good stockings and shirts; white ones for Sunday wearing, and coloured ones for the foundry, and last of all, wrapped in a fine silk handkerchief, had deposited therein a new Bible.

"There'll be no one now to read us the chapter at night," sighed Mrs. Drayton; "but you won't forget it when you are by yourself, Johnnie? and see you be a good lad, and mind your prayers—and bring home your things to be washed regularly on Saturdays — and don't forget us, Johnnie."

Good John, with a great tear just brimming over his nether eyelash, wrung his mother's hand with a half-sobbing, vehement "No!" there was no fear.

"Goodbye, lad; you'll be home on

Saturday," said his father, and so John set out on the journey and travail of life.

To "do" for himself; to be a separate unit, with a path stretching far away into the unseen, which he must tread for himself, and not another. Little he thought of that, as he carried his throbbing heart away into the din and bustle of his noisy occupation. Little they realized it, who were left dimly at home, yet it had begun.

Mrs. Smith lived in a narrow court, in a narrow street, in the northern division of the great town of Liverpool. The two dingy rows of houses were very near each other, grimly staring, with their perpendicular line of windows, into each other's eyes. They were very small places, all of them; four apartments, piled one above

another, a little dark, damp kitchen below stairs, a little boarded room, called a parlour, on the ground-floor, and then a bed-room of like dimensions, and then another, "the top room," from which you could see a few measured yards of sky; four pill-boxes, each above each, the lower ones darker, the upper ones lighter, with a painful line of stair connecting all. Such was the house of the Smiths.

It was moderately clean—that is to say, the kitchen floor was scrubbed, and rubbed all over with a white sandstone every Saturday, and the front steps carefully scoured every Sunday morning. There was a large family, descending from Susan, who worked at the one cotton-mill possessed by Liverpool, and Charles, the engineer apprentice, and Tom, who was an errand-boy, and had four shillings a-week, through a flood of

small boys and girls, to a shrill-voiced baby of one twelvemonth, which, to the great disgust of its nurse-sister, Hannah, would not begin to walk. How these branches of the house of Smith were disposed of, during the night, no one could guess, but the top-room remained sacred to the repose of Charlie and John.

And from its window of six panes, the country boy sometimes looked up upon the sky—the narrow strip of sky which sufficed to show him clouds — such white floating clouds as he had watched at home, travelling over the whole sunny breadth of heaven; now they passed in a moment out of his ken, over those dull chimneyed roofs, and an indefinite oppression and weight was on his heart.

He did not know what it was, and it came but seldom—for here was nothing

high, nothing exalted; himself might reach as great a height as anything he saw—his envy could at least: there was nothing so far beyond, so high above, as to balance the restless human being within him with the awe and mystery of the sublime. And so it was with all that sea of youthful spirits, growing men; the God, who was not in all their thoughts, had veiled over the great might of his creation from them; themselves, small, vain, and foolish, were all they saw, and their masters, repetitions of themselves, with only the wealth superadded.

Comparing themselves among themselves, strange standards of merit arose among those young working men; those somewhat vociferous lads, who called and thought themselves the strength and sinew of the country, and were indeed its raw un-

wrought material, with capabilities perilous, grand, and terrible, fermenting in their undisciplined hearts.

There were good points among them, too; brotherhoods, friendships, abundant cleverness, and sometimes a budding of unconscious heroism, made a sunshine in the shady place. Some one did something, small, perhaps, in the action, grand and generous in the spirit, and straightway the blank level of equality was freshened and elevated by admiration, and in the admiration was a happy emulative thrill, stirring them like the winds of Heaven. But, alas! for the flat level of that plain—there were no hills about them to dare and tempt the adventurous climber—no height gleaming among the clouds, in noble discontent to urge them on.

So the discontent, the natural impulse

of humanity assailed one point above all others. In the foundry, at the Mechanics' Institute, which some of them attended, in the singing saloon, and low theatre which attracted more, and in their private meetings, measuring themselves with themselves, the complacent lads grew conscious of having reached the highest pinnacle of cleverness and intelligence.

Young chartists did here feel confident that their hands could far more wisely sway the mystic helm of Government, than those of the grave experienced statesmen, who bore themselves more humbly in their high places, than those their would-be supplanters did in the low.

Young political economists there leaped with a bound to startling conclusions, which wiser and longer students would not dare; and all were satisfied—for in

the blank of that hapless equality of theirs, every man fancied himself the greatest. Their very books increased the delusion, for the great inheritance of their country and language did not belong to those young men. It was the new that especially charmed them.

The wise and erudite "Reasoner" manufacturing pert doubts of the truth of religion, and repeating difficulties long ago killed and buried in rich old philosophic tomes, which the young sceptics would not have glanced at if they could; the vilest of French translations; the seeming profundity of German materialisms. After all these, doubting as the great Combe doubted; patronising the Lord of Redemption, as Strauss and Voltaire patronised him; listening while good eager men, in false and unnatural positions, laboured to clear the

great solemn Book of God from the foolish railings of its antoganists, with a complacent smile, as the Reasoner listened —who so clever, so superior, so intellectual, as the young working man? For nothing lighted him but artificial light, none taught him but small men. The giants who had been in the land—poor lad, he thought them superannuated and old. The light of the true unapproachable sun—it was too common-place for him; he tried to analyse its beams, and called it common light.

So in this dearth of the great to emulate, he turned to envy the rich. Why was one man master and another servant? Why did young Mr. Hardman drive triumphantly to his slight duty in the office at ten o'clock, while Charlie Smith rolled up his shirt sleeves, and took hammer in hand

at six? And why should Mr. Shafton, the rich young clerk and merchant's son, wear rings and chains over his superfine cloth, while John Drayton's moleskin jacket began to wear at the elbows?

They were puzzling questions these, and asked from out that swamp of equality rung up and down in low grumbling echoes. Why? But no one asked why there had been Shakspeares' and Cromwells' once, where now there were only Charlie Smiths' and Mr. Hardmans' for the Mr. Hardman and the Charlie Smith alike esteemed their own mind and capability perfect, and its position only wrong.

But John did not at the first learn to repeat this—why? for those honest, wide, blue eyes of his were accustomed to look up—to look up to the great Heaven above all, and without questioning, rest upon the

absolute power and will of God—and in this world to look up lovingly to the faces of father and mother, and with respect to the white head of the old dignified vicar, and more familiarly to the round-about Squire: for none of all these constituted authorities did in the least degree resemble tyrants, and when the oracles of the work-shop, denounced priest and proprietor, John smiled within himself, and felt satisfied that he knew better. To know better than the great speaker — the future Home Secretary perhaps—it was a great preservative to John.

The father of Charlie Smith was a porter—a cotton porter, working at the docks, and earning a guinea a-week. He was an unsuccessful man, this John Smith; as strikingly so perhaps as is the John Smith who is a cotton merchant, and is

unsuccessful at the cost of twenty or thirty thousand pounds. The porter John had had one or two "glorious nibbles," bright, brief anticipations of places as warehouseman, with five and twenty shillings and a Christmas-box; but at one time, it was a supplanting Jacob that thrust him aside; and at another, it was a sample bottle of rum which, as warehouseman elect, he put into his pocket, and hence was warehouseman elect no longer. He bore it all moderately well, except when his wife grumbled; and lost a whole day, and a half one, now and then, and carried home diminished wages, without any great sympathy with the straits of the house-mother who expended the same; and so there were very frequent squabbles, and not much peace in the household, especially on these Saturday nights.

Charlie got easier terms from his mother than Mrs. Drayton had done. She boarded him for six weekly shillings, and the lad looked upon this home of his only as a sort of lodgings, where he got perhaps a little more attention than he would among strangers; but which were simply lodgings nevertheless, for which he paid, and was quite able to pay.

Tom, the errand boy, gave his whole four shillings to his mother; he was too young yet to assert his rights otherwise than by disobedience; but Susan at the factory was not so easily dealt with, and prompt and decided measures had to be taken with her, before she added any of her earnings to the family stock. A sad household it was, in which was no authority, no obedience, except among those very little ones, who still could be coerced with a blow.

And Susan and Charlie called this proper and necessary freedom, and upbraided their mother as a tyrant when she made a feeble termagant attempt to control them. Equal — equal to the very father and mother, set at the head of the divinely instituted family; what a sad dead blank was this equality.

There were no dissenting churches near them, and Charlie and his father agreed in decided enmity, blended with a bitter coward, fear of the Church. The Church slumbered there at that time. Sometimes a scripture reader limped among the people; sometimes a town missionary, solemn, good, illiterate man, held a prayer-meeting in the court; but Charlie Smith read the "Reasoner," and had some capital objections, proving the Bible all a piece of folly; and the good men who knew it to be power

and truth, without knowing it to be also grand, and beautiful above all beauty, were hot and weak, and stumbled in its defence; and Charlie Smith caring not a straw for either its truth or falsehood, read over his objections again, and thought himself cleverer than ever. It was a strange process—for no one ever awed the flippant lad with the calm might of faith; no one lifted up his hand to the heaven, and rejoiced vehemently with his whole human heart, that the magnificent Gospel lived and was true. The good men argued with the clever foolish lad, till John Drayton opened his eyes, and began to think those objections must have truth in them after all.

No churches astir and living, no educated, full-grown, ministerial man consecrated in solemn knighthood to conquer

unto God this chaos of the poor. Dissenting people, who declared that the "voluntary principle," and it only must evangelize the land, strangely forgot to observe that here was a great neglected field for them, with all free scope of working. Chapels, heathen temples blank and bland, were not wanting in the wealthier portions of the town; but here were miles of souls in hopeless gloom, and all the light afforded to them, by the voluntary principle, was here and there a town missionary at sixty pounds a-year. And *the* Church, as it called itself, and as they called it, was still asleep. One little Welsh place of worship, the thrifty Celtic people had made for themselves, and one Scotch Presbyterian one, had launched itself, and was making some headway through a dangerous sea. Hard-working Methodist

local preachers did what they could, not very effectually, in another of very small dimensions. And so with these lights, faint, far distant, straggling — the great, desert district was left to itself.

CHAPTER III.

But still every Saturday night, John Drayton went home with his good mother, who waited for him when her marketing was over. They jeered him at the foundry about his mother's apron-strings; but John, though he blushed sometimes, could afford to laugh at that. It had never entered into his mind to be ashamed of the tenderness of his mother; so he accompanied her home, and every Sunday went to the

old church, and heard the old, dignified, white-headed vicar preach his simple sermon. But John unfortunately did not heed the sermons; he enjoyed sitting at his mother's side, looking up to the old arches, bending on their stout white pillars over him, and listening dreamily to the vicar's voice, and thinking—of nothing, sometimes—sometimes of the politics, which began to take decided hold of the young manhood as it grew; sometimes of those vague doubts, the cool cavilling of flippant Charlie, the impatient warmth, not always very clear, of the religious men who answered him.

Then he was "wild" that Squire's son sitting in the great pew before them—"wild," bad, immoral, yet a much greater man than John Drayton; and John too began to say, why?—what if after all the Bible

were not true? What if the world was all wrong, and there should be a new distribution of its goods and honours, as the Chartist Wyld, and the Scotch sceptic Robison, said. John bethought him of Mr. Shafton's rings and chains, and sometimes grew angry, for very shallow were the brains of Mr. Shafton; and all this went on in the church, while the good man preached placidly as he had preached for forty years, and thought of scepticism and revolutionaries as little as of the powder magazines then resting unnoticed and unknown.

But when he came out to the churchyard with his mother, and took off his hat to the vicar's wife, as she passed him with a kind word, and a smile, all the chimeras of the Chartist and the Infidel melted from the mind of John. It was filled with

better, happier fancies, and perhaps it was not all his fault that the sermon did not oust the week-day oratory.

In the same narrow court—they called it Victoria Terrace, as one half of the Liverpool courts are called—the great Chartist orator lived. His name was Wyld, and he, too, was an engineer, though working at another foundry. His house was like Mrs. Smith's, but without lodgers, and a pale, delicate wife, and a quiet, grave daughter, were all the family he had, for his only son had quarrelled with him, and run off to sea. He had a great deal of power and ability, this Wyld; a strong, muscular, iron man, with a mind which grasped its subject with singular force, and there was a passion and vehemence about his language which strongly impressed his young audience. "The whole world was

given to us," said Wyld, his dark eyes flashing under his shaggy eyebrows; "and look you what we have now. There's them that say they're born to rule us—look what a set of fools they are; and there's the priests to teach us—and they're pretty men to teach anything; but they've got the land between them, and where's the chance of us getting any but the six feet we'll lie in, at the end?

"And what are we all working for? toiling and sweating every day—to make Hardman rich, and to make Steelyards rich—are they any better men than we are? Who's that grumbling? It's you, John Drayton."

"I didn't grumble—I only mean I'm not working to make Hardman rich," said sturdy John.

"You're not—what are you working for then?"

"I'm working to learn my trade, and I'm working to keep myself independent, and maybe to keep more than me," said John with a blush; "and if Hardman gets rich because he gives me work, I'm none the worse of that. I'd do any man a good turn—but I'm working for myself, Wyld, and not for Hardman, and so are you."

"So am I!" said the orator, with a calm superior smile. "So am I! when I work regular a whole week, I get thirty shillings—and that's working for myself, and not for Steelyards!"

A buzz of admiration ran round his young auditors—thirty shillings a-week—a man that might be Prime Minister!

"And why should I work from six in the morning to six at night?" continued Wyld. "Steelyards doesn't come to the office till eleven; Steelyards goes away at five; sometimes he misses a day altogether; and why should I be kept at it for ever, any more than him? Is he a better man than me?"

And the buzz of applause answered—No.

No. Mr. Steelyards was very little better than Mr. Wyld—they were as like each other as possible; but Steelyards had an iron will, and had laboured and got wealth, and was a master now instead of a man, and the orator banned the *millionnaire* when he recollected how very nearly on a level they had started.

And why was it—violent, strong men

both—why was it that Steelyards was so much higher than Wyld? John could not answer it to himself, and he thought of Mr. Shafton. Mr. Shafton was a merchant's son, who had been sent to Mr. Hardman's foundry as clerk, to get some knowledge of the business. He was some years older than John, and had an innocent, boyish face, a rather affected manner, a profusion of jewellery, and little brains, very little brains. On various occasions John had felt, with a thrill of indignant pride, his own natural superiority to Mr. Shafton; and when, after an animated harangue of Wyld's, he began to search for a grievance in this matter of equality, he instinctively fixed upon the young rich clerk. Did not he represent wealthy imbecility? Was not the station

he held, the attention he received, the gold chains he wore, all so many marks of the consideration men pay to wealth? In his apprehension of, and wavering belief in, the natural equality he heard talked of so often, Mr. Shafton became the representative of those natural enemies, the aristocrats, in the eyes of John.

"Come out next Sunday with us to Aintree. It's going to be the races next week—never mind going home with your mother. Come for this once, Jack," said Charlie. And John went.

They walked out in the morning, wearily, dustily, dragging themselves and the children over the hot roads.

"When I go out a pleasuring, I always say I'll never go again," gasped Mrs. Smith. "Carry little Willie for us, will

you, Johnnie; whenever shall we get there?"

"Nobody should ever take women and children when they go anywhere," said Charlie, "it's such a bore."

"Come on," said the sullen husband, "are we going to wait all day for you?"

Charlie Smith had "Chambers' Journal" in his pocket, and in it was the finest "article" treating of the Sabbath of the working man—the long refreshing walk—the heart worship in the fields—the pure lessons and high theology, which, from the hedgerows and the woods, would enter into his heart. But there was nothing about panting wives and wearied children, and this laborious waste and profanation of the day of rest; and all

the hedgerows they had passed, and Chambers himself to boot, could not induce Charlie to carry that baby for his weary mother.

"I'll never go out a pleasuring again," said Mrs. Smith, as she sat down in the bar of a country public-house, where there was a fire to exasperate the heated wayfarers, and loosened her shawl.

"Who cares if you never do? not I, I'm sure," said her husband, and Charlie echoed the sentiment. And this, oh benevolent Chambers! was the "pleasuring" of the working man's Sabbath-day.

Still more disagreeable was the jolting of the crowded cart in which they travelled home; and, when they did get home—unwashed, upon the little deal table, were the plates and the cups used at

breakfast; unswept, the cold blue ashes were crumbling on the hearth. They had been so much hurried to get away in the morning; and Susan, who would not carry the baby, had left their company long ago, with the cotton-spinning lad to whom she was to be married. There was no one to help poor Mrs. Smith.

"Get tea, will you, mother," said Charlie. "I'm not going to sit here all night."

"I'm not fit to stand," retorted the mother: "you've none of you the least bit of feeling for me."

And so a quarrel followed.

Tidy Mrs. Thomas, the little Welsh-woman opposite, was just then unlocking her door, with her flood of children behind her. Exactly like each other were all the little ones, and the face was their

mother's; a round little face with small black shining eyes, and cheeks like winter apples. They had all been at the Welsh chapel close at hand, and cheerily and happily were going home—home to get the pleasant Sunday tea, with great slices from the brown home-baked loaf, and then perhaps to go to chapel again. The plaintive wild melody of a Welsh hymn was murmuring about the lips of one of the little girls, and when you looked through the open door after they went in, you saw a pretty interior, worthy some painter of homes; peaceable, thrifty homespun Welsh household; how bright it looked opposite Mrs. Smith's.

"I won't stand this," said Charlie Smith, as he swung down the two or three steps from the front door, where John stood uncomfortable and annoyed.

"Come along, Jack, I'll get you some tea."

And John went passively, glad to be out of the quarrel.

They went—not to a public-house. "Robison's been away in Glasgow this long time," said Charlie, "but now he's back again, and he's turned teetotaller. He had an awful drinking fit just before. So he goes to the coffee-shop on Sundays, and we'll see him there."

Accordingly they went to the "coffee-shop" a Temperance hotel, by simple, unsuspecting people fancied respectable, and a capital thing for the working-man. There all through the bright summer day, among newspapers and cheap publications, the Scotch sceptic had been lounging, and now John was to be introduced to him.

He was a strong, tall man, with hair

of deep red, and truculent, overhanging brows—a face that repelled you with its look of cowardly daring. In his hand was a penny newspaper, rich in police reports; by his side the last number of the "Reasoner," and the respectable "Dispatch" closely flanked the coffee-cup upon the table.

"I thought you wouldn't stay in Glasgow, Robison," said Charlie.

"What for?" said Robison, and the truculent brows rose and fell with every word; "wha bade you think onything about the matter?"

"Oh! I mean, I thought you would come back," said Charlie. "We've been out at Aintree, seeing the race-course. What have you been doing with yourself all this day, Robison?"

"Twa steps mair, and I would hae been in the kirk," said the sceptic.

"You in the church!—you, Robison!—you!"

"And why no me? They say that Chalmers, the man they make so muckle wark about, preached years before he believed a word of it, if he did ever believe; and why should I no gang to the kirk to please my wife, and get a sleep, and a guid character, as well as my neighbours?"

"But you're above all that," said Charlie, loftily.

So he was: he poised the police reports in his hand, and looked a very superior man.

"I'm no heeding about tackling ministers," said Robison, quietly, "unless they

thrust it on me—or the other cattle subordinate to ministers. There was a Miss—Miss Something—the other day, that came to see my wife, and tried a throw at me. I was very canny wi' her, but she thought the house was gaun to fa' and bury us a', for blasphemy. It's best for *them*—the womenfolk—and a' weak creatures, to keep their ain way o't; I never try to disturb them; it keeps them best in their ain place, and high argument's no for them; but when I meet wi' a clever lad, wi' his mind open, that's a different thing."

"And what is it you mean?" said John Drayton, with a little wonder.

"You'll never have read Combe's 'Constitution of Man?'" said Robison, and John certainly never had; "but you get the 'Reasoner,' Charlie—give him a taste of that and the rest can follow a' in guid time.

Ye'll be a great reader;" this was said with an imperceptible sneer, for John did by no means look like a great reader.

"He's got one book always in his chest, I know," said Charlie.

"One book! what may that be? If it be of the right kind, it may be worth lots; there's Shelley's poems coming out in penny numbers; I could lend ye them—when I get them—but what's the one book?"

John grew red and hot; Charlie laughed.

"It's the Bible."

The truculent brows were drawn up, and then fell, and Robison whistled one shrill note—not a tune—the Scottish instinct was upon him, infidel as he was.

"Do you not believe the Bible?" asked John, hastily.

"Me? wha said I didna believe? I could make lees mysel' mair exact, that's a'. When

I write a Bible, I'll never contradict mysel'," said Robison.

"What do you mean?" asked John.

And the sceptic explained—a miserable, sad explanation — difficulties which only showed how the blind intellect had gone aside, and never seen the truth which it defamed — puny, paltry misrepresentations, all killed dead centuries ago, some of them still in the old form, some wriggling into new. A sort of diabolical knowledge, too, this man had of the words of the Bible, and a diabolic satisfaction in telling how once he prayed, and read, and was a member of the Church, and had family worship in his house; but it was all humbug—now he had found it out—and so, loftily and grandly, the superior, enfranchised intellect tossed away the Bible, and read police reports and Combe's "Constitution of Man."

Splendid issue; grand conclusion to the travail and labour of the young life—the coffee-house, the vile newspaper, the small philosopher's books! Yet those poor lads thought him grand and great in his capacity of sceptic, and he himself devoutly believed in the revelation of Combe, and next to Combe, placed himself high among the world's great men—those great men who, Wyld said, were only to be found among the poor.

John Drayton read no chapter that night; the difficulties, and the arguments with which he had heard these answered, confused him equally. Charlie, with whom this flippant scepticism was a thing of words, with which neither heart nor head had any concern, wondered a good deal at the painful looks of John, but understood them not; while poor John, in the darkness, felt a

burning tear upon his cheek, when the cadence of the Welsh hymn stole into his ears, as he returned home. Was it all chaos, here and hereafter? was there nothing true?

CHAPTER IV.

But the two lads were growing men. Charlie already was a fierce politician, an extreme and violent Chartist; and John, from sympathy with his companion, went a good way with him in the perilous road. Very far went the orator Wyld —a new distribution of property—the rich Church lands—the estates of the wealthy, idle nobles—all should again be shared; and each man's equal share would bring in the golden age again.

John's judgment said nothing to this, approving — but John's fancy muttered something. "If this new distribution of property does take place, after all," said John within himself, "and Mr. Shafton and I have to shift for ourselves in that great matter of the allotment, I wonder who'll get the best share? I wonder whose turn it will be to have the rings and gold chains then?" Poor John, with those natural human thoughts of his— how they gave his theory the lie.

"Mr. Shafton's a fool," exclaimed Charlie one night, as they were preparing to leave the foundry. "I say, you little rascal, get out of my way (this was addressed to a poor black labouring boy, one of the smallest drudges in the place—an unskilled Pariah). He's not got so good a head as our little Willie; and it's a pretty thing,

isn't it, that a fellow like that should crow over us just because his father's a merchant, and our's are only working men. I'll tell you what it is, John, the country won't stand it—it's no use talking—we must have equality and the rights of man. You little black sweep, do you see what you're doing? You've nearly capsized me with that wheelbarrow. I'll give you something to remember me by if you don't look out."

"Charlie," said John, "I wonder you speak so harshly to the boy."

"Oh! the little wretch," said Charlie, "couldn't he keep out of my way then? What right has he to be listening to his betters?"

"His betters!" said John, with a sudden compunction. "Ah, Charlie, what becomes of your equality then!"

What became of it, indeed? Charlie bent his brow sullenly, and made no answer.

It was a little world, that foundry, as every place where men assemble is—as every individual family is, indeed. Mr. Hardman, the principal partner, was a very ordinary man; so was his son, the young master whom Charlie envied, but so were not others within the enclosure of those same office walls. There, look at him, as he stands at the door, wheeling that pencil round and round in his unconscious fingers —Mr. Power, the managing partner. He has a dark face, with deep strong lines in it, and an upper lip, somewhat long, shutting firmly down upon that nether one. If there was a riot here, better Mr. Power than a hundred peace-constables; if a fire, or an explosion, or any sudden danger that

perilled human life, better that strong, untrembling, sinewy arm, those cool, keen eyes, that only dilate a little, and have a keener brightness where common men shrink and fear, than even a fire brigade. Here, in this office, he was once a clerk earning a hundred a year, and living with his wife and his little girl in a small house in Kirkdale. Now Mrs. Power might wear diamonds if she chose, and little Mary is a young lady and an heiress; for her father is a wealthy, prosperous man, infinitely greater, all the clerks think, than when he was himself a clerk.

Yet lovingly he looks back upon that old time; not any greater—for then he knew himself, though nobody else did, and was the same man as now; a man not to be envied, not to be doomed to equality—one of those in whom Nature asserts her own

political opinions—her old monarchical tendency—a ruler among men. In every great emergency, how they all looked to Mr. Power—how young Hardman himself, and Charlie Smith the Chartist ran to obey him.

In the office, removed to a respectful distance from young Hardman and Mr. Shafton, sits a slight youthful-looking lad. Brown hair, with a golden shade in it, lies on his pale forehead, and the features do not strike you as being either better or worse than those of ordinary men. They are idle to-day in the office, and the young master and the rich clerk are out, and Mr. Power stands at the door twirling in his rapid fingers the pencil he holds, and planning astute and swift plans. Young David Bruce leans his head upon his raised hand, in the closed fingers of which the

pen still rests, and looks out with fixed eyes as if in the clamorous, dirty yard yonder, was something he watched intently; but he sees nothing there, for those misty dreaming eyes, through which the light flashes sometimes like the sun through the morning dimness, are eyes that command worlds, and the poor foundry clerk is a poet born.

It is beginning to dawn upon him, that grand knowledge—beginning to serve him, conscious heir to all the glories of all the beautiful world. Far down below, rich men and poor men toil alike in their dim tumultuous world; high here upon his blessed eminence he gazes over his own kingdom with that unwitting smile. Bitterness is not with him, nor envy—let those speak of equality who would be equal; such are not his thoughts. There is no human

shadow between him and the sky, nothing above him but the heavens; the angels who one day, perchance, will marvel at the strange human music his brethren and he will make together—music that in the very heavens remembers for the greater joy its ancient tones of grief, until the angels themselves learn to know the joy of tears; and the Father and the Son, before whom he worships with his whole heart like a little child.

The poor sceptic Robison, who has found the Bible out, and now reads with edification and faith, police reports, and Combe's "Constitution of Man," and flippant Chartist, Charlie Smith, and hosts more like him, and poor chaotic doubting John—all are within the same walls with the ruler and the poet—a miniature world, happy for it, that poet and ruler are there.

"Let's have a walk, Jack," said Charlie when they had got tea, and had "cleaned themselves," that same evening. It was spring and the days were lengthening; this was a soft mild night, all the pleasanter for the contrast with some bleak March days just gone.

It was about seven o'clock when they reached one of the great piers outside the dock gates, and walked there to and fro looking out upon the broad Mersey.

Far down, towards the mouth of the river, ships innumerable lingered about the Cheshire shore; here opposite, they went and came like passengers in a street. Stately brig or schooner here and there, moved down, with now and then a bend, like the slight curtesy of some graceful ball-room beauty; little alert steamers flashed back and forward from shore to shore;

heavy sloops and barges lay still on the water, with the great red barked sail flapping disconsolately for want of wind; and yonder a strange sight—a great sea *athlete*, with its cordage bare as winter trees, and its three tall masts helplessly appealing to the sky, pounced upon and carried off by a little steaming snorting demon, about as long as the victim's bowsprit. The one a majestic ship, A 1, freighted with many hundred souls, written of in newspapers, its name tremulously laid up in hearts—and the song of the sailors clustering like bees, comes pleasantly over the river, as they heave up that heavy anchor, slowly swinging by the great vessel's side. The other is a steam-tug, with one man at the helm and another on the paddlebox, and a third expatiating idly on the deck, while some black intelligences

in the engine-room, keep the ogre there in play; but helplessly, hopelessly, in despondent silence, for now the heave yo ho! has ceased, the noble ship glides through the water in the wake of the small exultant demon, as it flees on through the churned waves with its snort of triumph. Cowed and trembling looks the giant victim—swift and silent rushes on the elfin captor. Prosaic owners call this little spirit the Mary Agnes—the Mary Agnes! one feels it should be the Fate, or the Retribution, or the Terrible, or some of those stern, grim, old man-of-war names, as on with demoniac speed and silence, it carries off its prey out to the wide sea, to leave it there to all chances of peril and shipwreck; and one feels a thrill of awe, as they pass away out from the shadow of the guarding rock, and peaceful river, to the great water

where ships are wrecked and men disappear to be seen no more.

For by and bye the spirit comes back out of infinity where its victim is lost, and carries off another and another, and hopelessly all submit; great, noble, majestic, material form; small, invincible, created spirit—there can be no contest between the twain.

"That steam-tug's Hardman's — he's making money in handfuls," said Charlie Smith, as he leaned against an iron post, and looked at the river; "and just see what lots of ships? Strangers would think we were rich and prosperous and all that, but how much of it comes to our share."

Pale David Bruce, the poor clerk, was near enough to hear. He had fifty pounds a-year, and his mother and he lived on it,

in two very little rooms and a closet, in a very little house, up on yon pleasant hill of Everton; but as the discontented artizan spoke, he looked out again upon that broad stream and its crowds of ships, with his smile.

"As much as goes to Mr. Hardman, Smith," said young Bruce.

"And how much goes to you?" said the flippant Charlie.

David looked out again. "All," he said, and the smile wavered into graver light. "All."

"All!—and his wages are less than mine," muttered Charlie.

"I mean—whatever Mr. Hardman has—the enjoyment of this belongs to me," said the young poet; "I fancy I have more property in the river than he has, and the river is a grander thing than a steam-tug—

not that I have not the steam-tug too, in so far as it delights me; and for the pleasure of any nearer connection," said David, laughing, "why, if I had that, I should esteem it no doubt, but having it not, I am quite content to take as much as is within my reach."

"Then I suppose you don't think all men are equal," said Charlie.

And David shook his head.

"No, surely, I do not think so."

"Well," said the Chartist, loudly, "I'm a free and independent man. I won't knock under to nobody; I suppose you think I'm not as good as Mr. Hardman."

"I cannot give an opinion," said David. "I fancy you must judge of that yourself."

"Well then, do you think you're Mr. Hardman's equal?" continued Smith.

The fine nostril expanded a little, the

misty eye looked out like a star, and then a smile of some strange meaning, which Charlie did not understand, melted over the young clerk's face.

"No," said David, "no," and smiling still, he turned upon his heel.

No, alas, no! there was no sort of equality between Mr. Hardman and David Bruce.

"Let's see," said John Drayton, meditatively, "now what sort of a man's Mr. Hardman, Charlie? He's a raging, swearing, guzzling old fellow, and the young one's a scamp. I'll tell you what Mr. Bruce means: that it's no such great affair to be equal with Mr. Hardman, after all—that's it, though I never thought of it before."

"And now, when you have thought of it, it's something wise, isn't it?" said Charlie, scornfully. "A great deal he knows about

it; as if I was going to be schooled by a fellow that makes less wages than me, and has to be called *Mister* Bruce. That's a pretty sort of equality. Since ever I was out of my time, I've had seven and twenty shillings a-week, and he has only a pound; and, because he's in the office, I have to *Mister* him. Wait till I see him again. They're all as proud as Lucifer, these Scotchmen; but see if I don't bring him down a bit."

"Where are you going to now?" said John.

"I want to talk to you, come along; there's been a fight between Wyld and Robison—in the meeting, I mean—for Robison hasn't lost any time since he turned teetotaller, and Tom Clinker, that he's with just now, says he'll make him his foreman;

so Robison doesn't mind holding by the *cause*, like Wyld."

"I wonder why Wyld won't be steadier," said John.

"Wyld's not a common man," said Charlie; "I don't see why he should stand Old Steelyard's nonsense; and he was off work a long time before he came to our foundry—so he's first and foremost of course in all about this."

"About what?" said John.

They were in a brick-field, wandering northward, and quite alone.

"There's to be a rise," said Charlie, solemnly.

And then came the particulars; again those much-spoken-of peoples' rights were to be demanded, and if they were again refused, then—

"We want nothing but union," said Charlie, in high excitement. "Don't you think the working-men in Liverpool could seize all the warehouses and foundries as easy as I could pitch away this stone? and don't you think we could get what we like out of them, if we had the warehouses? One of the Irishmen was for setting fire to all the ships, but I wouldn't do that, except I was drove to it. I don't care a straw for all the peace constables, and if they send for the soldiers, why then we must just meet them, that's all."

"And what's to be gained by all this?" said John, dubiously.

"Why, the Charter, to be sure, and liberty, equality and fraternity!" exclaimed Charlie.

"The Charter is all very well," said John, "but how the rest are to come, I don't see. It won't be by Act of Parliament, Charlie.

Suppose Wyld and Robison were up for Liverpool, they'd fight in Parliament as well as in the club, and that isn't brotherly."

"Never mind Robison; he'll never be a statesman," said Charlie; "he's all very well in his own way, but when you come to politics and government, Wyld's the man. He's all for the masters now, is Robison, since Clinker promised to make him his foreman; but we'll soon throw him overboard."

"But, Charlie," said John, "if you get rid of the masters, who'll give us work?"

"You fool!" exclaimed the excited revolutionary, "won't we seize everything? The foundries are more our's than their's. It's us that work them."

"We get paid for our work," said John, stoutly. "I'll have no hand in it. If that's what Wyld wants, its downright robbery.

I'd do something to get the Charter, and I wouldn't mind if they took some of the lands from the old fat bishops, and that set, and let us working-men have a chance; but I wont take from any man what he's worked for. Look here, Charlie; Mr. Power pays me honest and honourable for my work every Saturday, and do you think I don't know that he works a long way harder than I do. Now, what right have I to meddle with *his* wages. I wouldn't believe, if Wyld were to swear it, that, when all the men are paid, he has a shilling more to himself than he works hard for. No, it's out of all reason; if it were just to bring down such shallow chaps as Shafton, I'd have no objection; but that—"

"Dont tell me—you're afraid," said

Charlie, impatiently, "hasn't it been done before, and thought no robbery?"

"I am not afraid, and you know it," sad John, "and I can't tell what I might do if I was starving, but we're not starving. They may be in London, or in Manchester, but we're not here; and I'll hold to it that the masters have as good a right to their wages as we have to our's, and to take them from them's no equality."

"We're to have a great meeting on the North shore on Sunday," said Charlie, "you'll come, won't you? but let us go in here now."

The windows above them were open, and music and applause floated down from a brilliant upper room, while customers came and went from the bar below.

"Come along, Jack," said Charlie; but John turned away, for these amusements and temptations had little force with him. His tendency was to quite other pleasures so he turned and went home.

CHAPTER V.

THE night had grown chill, and now there was a heavy fall of rain. As it subsided, John walked home through the wet streets, with many musings. With little perception yet of the religious, he still had a clear moral sense, an instinctive apprehension of right and wrong; but while his mind remained quite unconvinced, his feelings leaned greatly to the revolutionary side. There was a good deal of attraction

in the excitement and mystery; and then Mr. Shafton's gold chains—they gleamed across John's fancy now and then, and made him angry, for had not he himself, by far, a better head than Mr. Shafton?

The house of the orator Wyld was the second in the court; he had to pass it to get home. Upon the damp step sat Rachel Wyld, shivering under a thin cloak, on which the lessening rain still fell drop by drop. The Chartist's daughter was always shy and unobtrusive, and now she shrank in to the closed door as if to avoid his notice. But John never passed Rachel Wyld; that pure look of her's had defended him, though she knew it not, from many a coarse temptation; and he was rather glad now that he could stop and ask what ailed her.

A stifled sob was in her voice when she spoke:

"Why need you ask me, John Drayton, when you must have heard it all?"

"What is it, Rachel?" asked John. "I did not hear. Can I do anything? for you will hurt yourself sitting there."

The girl started.

"That is true," she said, "I have no right to sit here, when I have work to do, but it rained so fast; never mind, I will go now."

"Where are you going, Rachel?" said John, as she rose and passed him by a few hurried steps. "It is too late for work now; let me go with you at least."

She went on without objecting, and in quiet sympathy he walked by her side; through the wet, glistening streets, through

the thronging streams of people, through a suburb, with its long line of quiet houses, till they came upon a dark and cheerless country road. It was the road to Walton, and John knew Mr. Hardman lived there.

"You are very kind, very good to me, John," said Rachel; "but if my father knew he would be angry. He is—oh what was I going to say?"

"I would do anything to help you, Rachel," said John, eagerly. "You may surely trust *me*."

"He is—I cannot help it—it is very bad and undutiful, I know, but I cannot help it. Oh, John Drayton, he will break our hearts—he will kill my mother!"

John did not answer, and could not. He knew already something of the violent temper of Wyld, but it had not occurred

to him, that one who was willing to plot and struggle, and incur danger for the enfranchisement of a nation, could be a tyrant at home.

"We've tried to hide it all my life," said Rachel. "I would not tell you, John, if I did'nt know you were sure to hear; for, to-night, he threw the door open, and all the court came to listen. He's gone to bed now, to sleep it off, and I came out whenever I durst leave my mother — my poor mother! she has borne it so long."

"And where are you going now, Rachel?" said John.

"It's only three weeks," said Rachel, with some bitterness, "since Mr. Hardman took him on. He had been off work for a whole month before that, and we had been toiling for him; and now this very day

he's gone and quarrelled with Mr. Hardman, and he's out of work again."

"But it would be Hardman's fault; they're so aggravating," said John.

"It wasn't Mr. Hardman's fault; I used to work for Miss Jane, and I know Mr. Hardman; he's bad enough, but he's not so proud and cruel as my father. Oh, John Drayton, you speak about equality. I used to think if you only knew—if you young men only knew."

"If we knew what, Rachel?" said John.

But Rachel was fighting with her sobs, and scarcely could answer.

"I never speak," said the Chartist's daughter, "but I think sometimes, John. When I'm at my work I'm quiet—quieter than you are at the foundry—and I couldn't help thinking even if I wanted; and men

are equal; but, oh, they're far unequal too."

"But I don't know what you mean, Rachel," said John, humbly.

"I mean—there's my father and Mr. Hardman—you may call them equal; but do you think any of them are equal to Mr. Power? And there's Charlie Smith and the young master; the one is just as good as the other; but will they ever be like Edward Cooper, the foreman? I wonder at you, John—you that should know better."

Why should he know better?

A blush came over the cheek of John in the darkness, and his heart warmed. He was quite satisfied that Rachel should think so—

"But, Rachel, we want to make them all equal," said John.

"And how will you do it, John?" asked Rachel.

John was silent. To give them a vote? Alas, no, it would not do. To make them equally rich?—but still Edward Cooper, the foreman, stood on a height as unapproachable to young Hardman, the rich master, as to Charlie Smith; so John made no answer; but doubtfully wandered through these perplexities, seeing nothing clearly.

"For, having a vote—would that make my father a better man?" said Rachel with new courage; "or, would he be a better man if he were rich? But Mr. Hardman is rich, and Edward Cooper is better than he."

"Well, Rachel, I'm not good at arguing," said John; "but take us altogether, we're as good as the masters, and why should they be rich and we poor."

Rachel was not good at arguing either.

To make an impression and succeed in a controversy, one is not generally much the better of being a good disputant, and her own conviction was very distinct if her logic was not overpowering.

"Because it must be," said Rachel eagerly; "and because God does not make the people in any particular class miserable; for the good heads and the good hearts are mixed everywhere — it's not all the mean and low who are poor, nor all the honourable and generous who are rich—for they're all mixed. I'm going to Miss Jane now to get her to speak for my father. Miss Jane might be a queen—but she speaks to me as if I was her sister; she thinks everybody better than herself."

They had come to the gate of Mr. Hardman's house, and Rachel entered and threaded her way through the dark shrub-

beries alone. The happy power of the ideal was stealing over John. He thought that Rachel, too, might be a queen—as good as Miss Jane; and that happy union of the two — the poor, pure maiden, — the rich gentle lady, each with her own refinement—cast a glory of true kindred over the tumultuous human race again. Equality! He began to see it was no chimera after all.

By-and-bye he heard voices coming through the evergreens before Mr. Hardman's house.

"My father does not mean all that he says," were the words John heard. "So don't think of his harsh way, Rachel. He is harder to me sometimes; but he means nothing; so you must not mind him, Rachel."

"And neither I do, Miss Jane," said

Rachel Wyld. "Mr. Hardman is very good. We don't deserve that he should do half so much for us as he's willing to do. I know that; and if it had not been for my poor, mother, I should not have come on this errand to-night."

"Hush, Rachel," said the daughter of the harsh master. "We must bear with him; in some good hour he will see how wrong he has been. Be very gentle with him, Rachel; I know it is hard, but few such duties are easy; let us try to do him good. I always think we will succeed in the end."

John's eyes were growing wet as he stood without the gate, unseen in the darkness. Was this one of those whom Wyld and Charlie Smith called the natural enemies of the poor?

"I will come in a day or two to see your

mother," said Miss Hardman: "there will be better times soon, no fear; and come back yourself whenever you have time, Rachel. I always like to see you, you know—good night."

Good night to the young gentle woman soon to lie down under that wealthy roof, with sadness in her heart, and hope. Good night to her maidenly peer and equal, as she carries pure and gentle thoughts through the dull streets to her unquiet home. Unquiet homes both have, rich and poor; homes, that sullenly receive, but never ask, blessings from the full hand of heaven; and John Drayton began as he thought of them, to be conscious of an incoherent thankfulness, that all were not equal, but yet that there was equality in the world.

Mrs. Wyld was looking stealthily out,

when Rachel and John returned. Up stairs lay the orator, buried in heavy sleep, and his poor wife trembling for his waking.

"Mr. Hardman will take him on again if he likes to go, mother," said Rachel under her breath: "he can go back in the morning; no one will say a word—if he likes."

"But he won't like, Rachel," said the subdued mother.

"I pleaded with Mr. Hardman, and he was harsh," said Rachel: "and now we'll have to beseech my father, and he'll be worse than Mr. Hardman. Oh! it's not easy, mother."

Mrs. Wyld sighed. Twenty years ago she had found out that it was not easy.

"Were you with Rachel all the way? thank you, John," she said: "Now we're

only making a noise here; we'll waken your father, Rachel; good night."

And the two women crept in, and timidly shut the door, afraid to awaken him; the violent strong man, who would treat their pains so unworthily to-morrow.

But John's work for that night was not yet done. He went in tired, and had scarcely seated himself, when Mrs. Smith began to question him about her son: "Where was Charlie?"

It was in vain that John assured her he had parted with him hours ago; the poor, querulous, unhappy mother spoke and looked as if he had some responsibility, and was answerable for her son. Some presentiment had taken possession of her; and though it had been Charlie's wont for some time to assume all the privileges of a man—to come and go when he pleased—the mother,

a mother still in spite of all her carelessness, remained up waiting for him in a fever of anxiety. John too sat up, partly because he had various things to think about, and thought is wakeful, and partly that his presence might in some degree shield Mrs. Smith from the impertinences of her son, if Charlie imagined, as he was most likely to do, that her sitting up for him was an encroachment on his liberty.

Eleven—twelve—and still Charlie did not come. At length Mrs. Smith, agonized by fears of her own creation, begged John to go and look for him. Good-humouredly, yet not without reluctance, John went, thinking as he walked slowly through the deserted streets, that neither Charlie nor he would be very fresh and fit for work at six o'clock on the next morning. He went down over the canal bridge towards the

docks, for the place where he had left Charlie was close upon the river. The road was very dark and silent, inhabited only by a dreary policeman, and John looked into the dark shadow of the foundry curiously as he passed it, but Charlie was not to be seen.

Opposite the gate of one of the docks was the place of entertainment to which Charlie had gone, and as John approached it, he became aware of a vociferous crowd slowly dispersing. Two stout policemen were vigorously pushing through it, holding between them an unruly prisoner, with blood oozing from a cut on his brow. There had been a drunken brawl, and this was Charlie Smith.

John's interference was quite useless. The policemen would not release their prisoner; and Charlie himself ordered his

grieved friend away, and called him meddling. "He was a free man, and would do as he liked." John ascertained that there was little harm done, and that this was a very usual nightly scene, entailing upon the offender only a night's imprisonment; and so, unable to render any help, turned homeward, while Charlie alternating between shouts of boisterous mirth, and struggles of vain resistance, was led away in the opposite direction to his temporary prison.

Despondingly John returned home; these miseries and sins depressed his kindly heart, although in them he had no immediate share; but high up, in the top room of the Chartist's house, burned still the faint light by which Rachel Wyld laboured; and his heart warmed, and grew hopeful. Not all capricious tyrants, or indolent cumberers of the

ground among the rich—not all coarse profligates, or flippant doubters among the poor. Mingled well — mingled all; and John began to understand the distribution of ranks and distinctions as it is in the sight of Heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARLES SMITH returned home the next day with a disfigured face, and dress torn and destroyed, and sullen defiant spirit. A shower of epithets greeted him, as he came in at the dinner hour, and Charlie recriminated with all his might. John sat at the table with pain, and hastily swallowed his plain dinner, while the loud voices around him exhausted themselves. At length the storm in some degree subsided.

"Make yourself decent, and get out to your work, you good-for-nothing," said Charlie's father, angrily.

"I'll see you far enough first," said the son.

"Who do you think's going to toil to keep you idle," said the elder Smith.

"That'll do," said Charlie; "I'm not going to stand any nonsense. I'll work when I think proper, and I don't think proper to-day; so it's no use talking."

A loud wail of accusation followed from Mrs. Smith, in the midst of which John hurried out. Charlie was scowling at him, and the parents looked as if he had led away their son. A stranger holds a very painful place in any family quarrel, so John took up his cap and fled.

He met Rachel Wyld in the street.

Rachel was in despair: her father would not avail himself of the permission to return, which she had so painfully extorted from Mr. Hardman; he would not go back to the work, he was a free man, he would be tyrannized over by nobody.

"What shall I do, John?" said poor Rachel, "I work till I can hardly stand. I felt as if I had some mist floating in my eyes all last night, and my head was so dizzy and light, I could scarcely keep it up. It's all with the work; but I can't make enough to keep them, and my mother is so delicate. Oh, John, what am I to do?"

But John could counsel nothing: he went away to the foundry quite disconsolately, oppressed with the consciousness of misery and sin.

"Mr. Cooper," said John, as he came up to the foreman, "I wish you would speak to Wyld. He's quarrelled with the master, and he wont come back, but he might, perhaps, if you would speak to him."

"I will if I see him, John," said the respectable foreman, "but he's not a safe man in the work, and for my part I'm very glad he's away."

"Why?" said John, with a little jealousy. Mr. Shafton had just passed them with a good-humoured nod.

"Has he not made you a Chartist, John Drayton?" said Mr. Cooper.

John hesitated, for he was scarcely a Chartist. "Would I be any worse if he had?" said the ambiguous John.

"I don't know—there's good things in the Charter, and there's bad," said the

foreman, "but I know what Wyld preaches, and what almost all of them preach—that the Charter's to do everything. Now if you believe that, you certainly are the worse for it."

"I believe it would do a great deal," said John, with a little controversial heat, kindled by opposition.

"That's the mischief of all these politics," said the foreman, meditatively; "it's not their own share of good they're to do, but it's everything. They're like the quack medicines. I'd believe in Holloway, if he held by one disease, and said he would cure it, and so I'd maybe believe in the Charter; but when the one pill's to cure everything, I get to have no faith in it at all, John."

"But we want something, Mr. Cooper," said John; "don't you see we want something."

"Ay! I see you do, John," said Cooper, "and will Wyld be a good man, or a man to be respected, think you, when he gets the Charter? or will Charlie Smith, when he has a vote, be as steady a lad as you? If ever that day comes, we'll see; but men are harder to work upon than engines, John, and if half a dozen cranks were wrong, in half a dozen different machines, we'd need, in our trade, to put every one right, separate, and by itself; and it'll end in that with the men, I'm afraid."

"Every man for himself, and God for us all!" said David Bruce, as he came up. "They used to savour of hard-heartedness, these old words, but they are truth and life in this matter, if we understand them aright."

"Ay, Sir," said the foreman, gravely, "every man in his own heart looking what's

wrong; every man in his own house setting to rights what he can, and getting what he can't, done to his hand when he asks it. I'd trust him with any Charter then, when he's working separate at his own machine, and knowing it's *it* that's out of order, and that God must set it right who made it, and not the State or the World."

But drearily that divine name fell upon John Drayton's ear, echoing through the painful blank within. He felt it awe him as those sober lips repeated it reverently: Cooper and Robison—they were different men.

"The magistrates want to swear in all the men as special constables, Mr. Cooper," said David, "do you think they will consent? for there are serious fears of a riot Mr. Power says, and in London great preparations are making to crush it. Mr.

Power desires you to speak to the men, and let him know."

An unusual colour was on the young clerk's delicate cheek, and his hand trembled a little: that quick imagination of his showed him the riot begun already, and he was considerably excited; but cool, grave, and silent was Mr. Power.

They were in the yard of the foundry; a certain degree of excitement was among the men, too. They had crowded in, a little before the hour, and stood about in groups, all within reach of the "master's" voice. The "master" did not speak loud, but there was not a man there, whose frame did not thrill to the voice of the ruler among them.

"If there is any disturbance," said Mr. Power—he was speaking in his ordinary way, without addressing any one particu-

larly—it was not a speech, "if there is any disturbance, it is threatened that the rioters will attack factories and foundries, and take possession of them—this place, for instance," and a spark of stern humour was in his eye, and a momentary smile passed over his face. "Possession they certainly shall never take of these walls: many men have honourably earned bread for their families here, where I have earned mine. I shall be glad if all resolve to defend their lawful labour, as I do, here, where we have worked together for years: our stake is equal—I am willing to trust my men—desirous that my men should trust me."

They were all silent. Close beside Mr. Power stood David Bruce, looking on them with an inspired face, like a sunset sky, and with eager, burning, fervid words hanging on his lips.

Two or three separate individuals made a step forward, and then stepped back again with a little confusion. They were not voluble, those engineers.

"Sir," at length said an old deliberate Scotsman, at whose back stood a numerous group, and who spoke slowly, and with a certain pomp, as though his words were solemn, and to be weighed, "Sir, we'll no be sworn in; unless it's urgent and imminent; we'll lift no hand against our brothers, misled lads though they be; but here, in the foundry, we'll stand by you, fit for fit, as lang as leeving man can stand. I'm no empowered to undertake for ony mair the noo, but I gie ye my word o' that. I ken no man here will gar me fail o' my promise; as lang as *ye* defend, *we'll* defend, against whomsoever,

whensoever they try. Gie you the word, and we're at your hand."

The old Aberdeen man stepped back; the face of the master was lighted with a momentary dark glow, and then there rose a timid, adventurous cheer. Again, with full force of hearty lungs, and right good will—Hurrah! and the league was formed—in defence.

"In defence! it's a mair purpose-like weapon that the man's hand has, in the auld arms of Scotland," said the Aberdeen spokesman of the foundry, as he balanced a great bar of iron in his hand; "but there's nae saying what a man might do wi' the like of this in a cause; for the wives and the bairns—a peaceable land and decent wages—in defence!"

And Peter Don marched away valorously to the moulders' workshop, carrying the

bar of iron on his shoulder like a musket, and whistling "Tuttie Taitie" like a hero.

Young Hardman stood alone by the office window, playing with the *baton* of a special constable, which he held in his hand, and whistling—not "Tuttie Taitie," but "Oh, Susannah," or some melody equally classical, the "Oh, Susannah," of the time. He was trying to look contemptuous and sneer witheringly at "that puppy Power," for speaking of *his* men and *his* determination, but only succeeded in looking very impertinent, as he was, and showing bad teeth underneath his lip's sinister curl; but no one heeded Hardman, for all eyes were on the "master."

Mr. Shafton had a constable's *baton* too, and once or twice it fell, while Peter Don was speaking, because Mr. Shafton was

excited and nervous, and could not keep his hand steady; and Mr. Shafton's broken voice was heard first in the timid suggestive cheer; and when the full hurrah came, Mr. Shafton could not join it, because his voice fell off abruptly into a great laugh; a laugh that choked him, and brought the tears into his eyes, and again his *baton* fell.

John Drayton saw Mr. Shafton's laugh, without seeing the antecedents, and once more thought Mr. Shafton an empty-headed fool, and looked bitterly over at the gold chains glancing in the sunshine; while still Mr. Shafton tremulously prolonged his laugh, and shyly meditated a pilgrimage round the yard to shake hands with all the men. The men were getting to their work now; the din and noise beginning again, and in the clang of ham-

mers and engines, the excitement died away.

"Every man for himself, and God for us all," and not the one mechanical State for every man, and the name of God blotted out from the very skies. Which was it after all?

CHAPTER VII.

AGAIN, the long night passed, and Charlie Smith did not return. The town was in a ferment of excitation and alarm; the streets were alive with special constables; the people of all kinds and classes were alarmed. Wild stories were among them of what the rebels might do—of fired ships and seized warehouses; and of the policemen watching here and there in secret bands, and the soldiers whom the aroused magistrates had sent for. The town was in a fever.

Again, another night, and Charlie had not been home. Great, fretful, complaining anxiety was in the house of the Smiths all day long. At night the little ones were peremptorily sent off to bed a full hour earlier than usual, and Tom, who was now a porter like his father, went out to search through all his usual haunts for Charlie; but Charlie was not to be found. The mother's natural tenderness, it seemed, had suddenly awakened in Mrs. Smith's callous worldly heart. She could speak of nothing but Charlie, as she walked up and down through the little kitchen wringing her hands. Minute kindnesses which one would have thought might have been forgotten long ago, came up now fresh to her remembrance. She extenuated his faults, she found out his virtues—was he not but a boy? Then as the night fell, she made pilgrimages to the

end of the court, and stood there, gazing eagerly along the street to watch for him, but still he did not come. His father sat by the fireside in sullen anxiety, saying nothing, but starting at every passing footstep, and ever and anon looking drearily at the door.

They had heard that this was to be the decisive night; that on the swiftly-coming morning of to-morrow their wayward boy might be fighting an open rebel; that his youthful blood might be shed upon the streets before another sun went down, and nature yearned within them over their disobedient son. They forgot his presumptuous airs of manhood; they remembered him only as their child, and blunted emotions struggled up within them once more fresh and powerful. The night went on—how slowly! how painfully! but Charlie did not return; and Rachel Wyld, too, stood at her door, with a

sharp, pale, anxious face, listening for her father. Tom Smith had not come back; their anxiety became almost insupportable, and overcome by the sight of it, John offered to go in search of Charlie.

He went, with Mrs. Smith's thanks ringing in his ear, and her urgent entreaty that he would not return without her son, sounding like a command in the voice and power of her emotion. John knew their place of meeting well, for he had gone there often, fascinated by Wyld's fervid, natural eloquence. He was even a little piqued that he had not been invited to this night's meeting, or told what was its object; but John was not sufficiently one of themselves to be asked to share their more secret counsels.

The house was closed—perfectly shut up and dark; but John, feeling that he could not go back without some intelligence to the

anxious and terrified household, went to a back entrance, and knocked long and softly. The door was not opened till after careful reconnoitring, and then was held ajar; for the man who came to it knew John, and evidently expected a new adherent. After some little delay, Charlie, for whom John asked, came to the door, and though he listened to his entreaties with impatience, invited him to come in. John entered unsuspectingly.

"We don't want any traitors here, John Drayton," said Charlie. "You shan't go out again till morning, when we go ourselves. Will you be an honest fellow, and join us? If you will, I'll take you in—listen, Wyld's speaking; if you won't, I must lock you up here."

John was startled, yet collected himself rapidly.

"I won't go in, Charlie," he said, with indignant boldness. "I'll have no hand in your plots, and it's a bad beginning to entrap an innocent man and a friend. I'll stay here, if I must. I'm in for it now any way; and I'd almost as soon be taken for a rebel as face that poor mother of yours. Oh, Charlie! only think of them at home, and come back with me."

"Don't bother me with your nonsense," cried Charlie, impatiently. "Women are always whining and making a row. I've got other work to do."

And so John Drayton passed the night.

The sound of voices—sometimes one alone haranguing vehemently—sometimes a confused murmur of many—came on his ear, with brief intervals, through all those dark, slow hours. Liberty, fraternity, equality—*they* were not there in that assembly, amid

its contentions, its bullyings, its threats—and thus they were to make a nation happy and free.

But John was alone in the darkness, and when the voices ceased, and complete silence aggravated the gloom, the hair bristled upon the head of the prisoner. In these exciting circumstances, sleep was not to be dreamt of, and phantoms, such as haunt the infidel, began to awake his imagination into terror; for nature will not be defrauded, and when you take faith from her, must fall back upon superstition. Robison believed in ghosts, though he did not believe in God. The astute sceptic, reading the "Constitution of Man" in the daylight, trembled to be alone in a dark room by night; and John remembered and trembled too.

Strange, wild, distorted spiritual world which presses upon the denier of heaven!

—as if malicious devils, trembling with knowledge of the truth, rejoiced to avenge upon these blind, their own incapability of faith, and could not choose but mock, even while they tempted them.

John had never suffered such a night; the cold dew was bursting on his forehead as he covered his eyes with his hand. And he had seen nothing? No, but in spite of all his reasonings had trembled every moment lest he should see—had fancied mysterious touches on his dress and on his hair, and had fallen prostrate before the world of spirits; he who tried to deny existence to the great Spirit, the ruler and guide of all.

The morning broke at last, stealing through crevices in the shutters and in the door, in cold, gray, real light, and

the phantoms fled before it. He began to think of sublunary dangers now, of being taken for a rebel, disgraced, unjustly punished, and very bitterly he thought of his late comrades—of the heartless treachery of Charlie, the misleading eloquence of Wyld.

By and bye John heard a stir in the place of meeting, and a procession was marshalled with banners and devices, alas! with arms also, and filed out. A little band only, for they were now on their way to the rendezvous where other local societies were to meet them. Charlie who was the last to leave the house, contemptuously bade John follow him.

"You may go off home. We're not afraid of any tale-bearer now. Oh, you'll be in time for your work, John; and when

we come to the foundry, you'll join us then when we're strong, I know, like a prudent man, as you are."

John had not time to speak the angry reply which rose to his lips when they emerged into the street. In another moment, suddenly springing from some other place of concealment, the street was filled with a strong body of policemen. They had lain in skilful ambush until the very last moment, and now pounced upon their prey. As it happens in all conspiracies, it had happened in this—there had been a traitor among them. A scuffle ensued. John did not recollect the course of the events which thronged through these few exciting moments. He knew that he had held Charlie Smith back; that he had himself been involved in an unwilling struggle with a policeman, and had called to Charlie to escape;

that Charlie did escape; and that in the dim dawning of the chill spring morning, he was marching between two men to gaol, to answer for his generosity as for a crime.

Shame, disgrace, humiliation, a burning and throbbing sense of injustice, overpowered him. He began to think himself weak for having so tamely thrust himself into danger. He thought of his mother—how it would break her heart; of his father—how his pride would suddenly be changed into shame, and John's spirit sank within him. Who would poor Rachel Wyld have to comfort her now? Her father too was among the captives; but John for once was selfish, and pitied only himself; the rest deserved, at least, had wilfully subjected themselves to it—but what had he done? And who would believe his story, however truthfully he told it? not he was sure that ruddy impetuous

magistrate before whom they were hastily and briefly examined, and who did not hear the few convulsive words of self-exculpation which fell from John's lips. He exaggerated, as all are apt to do in their first misfortune; he thought, poor lad, in his simplicity, of banishment, perhaps of death—at least of inevitable disgrace and dishonour. His grief swelled to suffocation; and when he found himself alone in that closely barred cell, and heard the lock turn upon him, he laid down his head upon his hands in misery, and wept bitter tears.

But as he began to think of it, the sky cleared, and John in some degree recovered himself. He was in gaol, it is true; but he was in gaol without cause; and there is a great consolation, as well as a great pang, in suffering unjustly, so his energy returned to him. From his gaoler he obtained a

crumpled sheet of paper and a pencil, and painfully began to write a letter to Rachel Wyld, explaining his circumstances. Harder and harder these circumstances looked, as he described them.

"Charlie Smith has got off, and here am I," wrote John; "but if Charlie has the spirit of a man, he'll bear me witness that I was locked in, and had to stay all night against my will. I went there last night out of pure goodwill to him, and nothing else; and if I have to suffer for it, it'll be a cowardly thing of Charlie. And to-morrow's Saturday, Rachel, when I should have gone home, by rights, with my mother; if you'll go over and tell her, I'll be grateful all my life. Tell her I'm here, and I can't help myself; but the fault is not mine. I mayn't always have been as good as I might have been, but I never did anything to deserve

this, and I'm thankful for it. But it's a dreary thing being shut up here. I'd rather have got myself half killed at the foundry, if I might have had my choice of the two."

Another revulsion of John's excited feelings took place when he understood, that this simple letter of his must be sent open to the gaol authorities, before it was forwarded to its destination. But it could not be helped, and he was compelled to submit.

And again passed the slow, vacant day, and the dreaded night. He tried to think "of good," poor fellow, but could not; and happily he slept.

On Saturday morning, as early as visitors could be admitted to the gaol, his mother and Rachel were with him.

"Oh, Johnnie, my poor lad, why did'nt you take more thought of yourself?" sobbed

Mrs. Drayton; "but I'm as thankful as I can be that it's nothing bad you're in for—and when will you get out, Johnnie?"

"I can't tell, mother," said the despondent John, "maybe not for years."

Mrs. Drayton uttered a great cry.

"Never mind him—he doesn't mean it," said Rachel. "He couldn't be so long as that, whatever happened, and he'll only be till Monday, I think; for I was asking, John, and you're to be examined again on Monday."

"And what does Charlie Smith say, Rachel?" said John.

"Charlie Smith has run away; *he* doesn't mind leaving you to suffer for him; but some of the other men will tell, if we get a lawyer to make them," said Rachel; "and if your mother would go to Mr. Power—if you will only go yourself to

Mr. Power, Mrs. Drayton, I am sure he will speak for John and get him off."

"But maybe he wouldn't heed a poor body like me," said the weeping mother.

"Oh, no fear. Mr. Power would not see any one wronged," said Rachel. And John's heart lightened; for he, too, had perfect confidence in Mr. Power.

Mrs. Drayton had arranged to remain in Mr. Wyld's house until John's fate was decided. The mother and son were left alone together for a time while Rachel went to see her father—and Mrs. Drayton, half in lamentations over her prisoner, half in praises of Rachel, which were very pleasant to John's ears, filled the short half hour with kindly eloquence; and then they left him again alone in his cell.

When they left the gaol, they proceeded

at once to the foundry. Cooper, who met them, looked compassionate, and yet stern.

"It is a sad business this for your son, Mrs. Drayton," said the foreman, as she timidly lingered at the gate.

They told him John's story, and his aspect changed.

"Mr. Power is not at the work to-day. The magistrates are getting a lot of soldiers sent down to Liverpool, and the master had to go away about something. If he's down on Monday, I'll tell him the first thing. You may trust to me for that, or anything else I can do."

With that assurance they had to be content. At the office window Mr. Shafton was standing, amusing himself in complacent indolence, while the light sparkled in his costly ornaments. They did not speak to him; but Mrs. Drayton cast upon

him a look of bitter contempt as, sick at heart, she turned away.

And then they could do nothing, but—painfullest and hardest task of all—wait, until John's sentence should be known.

That afternoon some one knocked at the door, and Rachel starting nervously to open it, for in their excited anxious state, every trifle exaggerated itself into importance, admitted Jane Hardman. She had heard the name, now only too well-known, of Wyld, as one of the imprisoned conspirators, and had come to comfort his helpless wife and daughter and offer them assistance. No assistance could help Wyld—he was too much involved to give them any hope of escape for him—but very different was the case of innocent John Drayton. Miss Jane heard their story with such gentle kindness as cheered Mrs. Drayton's heart,

and promised to speak to the magistrate whom she knew and would see that night. It was a secret, almost clandestine visit this, for the other Hardmans were exasperated and knew no mercy; but light and hope traced the gentle footsteps of Rachel's Miss Jane, and she left them cheered and comforted.

The day came at last, and at an earlier hour than he expected, John was conducted to be examined first, alone; why, except that such was Mr. Edwards' pleasure, he was not told; and John was led to the magistrate's room. His keeper and he were detained a few minutes at the door, and John was an involuntary listener to the conversation going on within.

"I have no doubt, Mr. Edwards—not the least doubt his story is quite true," said a youthful voice, from which a strange

warmth of bashful eagerness, seemed to have banished its usual affectation, and which John started to hear. "He is—he is—a good fellow, Mr. Edwards, I am sure, a good fellow! I never saw him behaving ill, never; and kind—very kind-hearted; I assure you it's quite impossible, Sir, he never could be implicated in such a plot as this."

"Ah, Shafton," said a harsher voice, "that's all you know. He might be counterfeiting to get your good word if it came to the worst. You don't know them, I tell you, they're as cunning as—"

"Hush, hush," interrupted the first speaker, "Hardman, Mr. Edwards is going to speak."

"I was about to say," said the magistrate, "that what I heard of this lad from my

young friend, Jane Hardman, last night, determined me to examine him alone, and form my own opinion of the truth of his story. Appearances are against him, Mr. Shafton; but as you must have had many opportunities of observing him, your recommendation shall have its full weight. Only, you know, a man may be all you have said, and yet infected with this political madness. It is very much to be lamented, but those agitators very often lay hold of intelligent men."

"Not John Drayton," said Mr. Shafton eagerly," not him, I am sure. If you had only seen him in the work; he's such a sensible fellow! and I'll—I'll be his bail, Mr. Edwards, with all my heart. I have no fear of him."

"It does you great credit, this warmth,

Mr. Shafton," said the grave voice of the magistrate; "but how has the young man secured for himself so high a place in your opinion?"

"He's—he's a very good fellow," said Mr. Shafton, still more bashfully. "His mother was at the foundry on Saturday. I did not speak to her, Mr. Edwards—but it needed no words to show how grieved she was, and I have noticed them often; poor Drayton is always so tender, so—so dutiful to his mother!"

A harsh laugh from young Hardman, rung painfully upon John Drayton's ear.

"I commend your judgment, Mr. Shafton," said the magistrate, gravely. "I shall give your recommendation its full weight, I assure you."

John heard a door open and shut, as these

words were said, and immediately he was called in. His eyes were so blinded with involuntary tears, that he could only distinguish the face of the magistrate through a mist. Gravely, and not without severity, he was questioned; and after he had steadied himself a little, John answered with manly, straightforward simplicity and truth. By and bye, after his story had been searchingly investigated, he was sent back to his cell, to spend a few hours more in sick and anxious waiting, relieved only by strangely-blended thankfulness and admiration of Mr. Shafton. Mr. Shafton! John did not know whether to abound most in compunction and remorse for the evil thoughts he had entertained of his young benefactor, or in the joy of a generous spirit at discovering such generosity in another.

And that night, released by Mr. Shafton's bond and that of Edward Cooper, the foreman, who willingly became surety for him, John sat in Mrs. Wyld's room, by his mother's side, and (he forgot then, in his emotion, that he was an unbeliever) heard Rachel read of that Good Samaritan whose merciful memory lies embalmed in Holy Writ, recorded by the mightiest voice that ever spoke human words, in the ears of listening men. And Rachel read: "Which, now, of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour to him who fell among the thieves? And he said: He that showed mercy on him." And Rachel paused there, with a joyful, trembling voice, and John bowed down his head, and said an "Amen!" within his heart, too deep for speech, while his mother lifted up her hands to the great

Father of all love and kindness, and craved a blessing on *his* youthful head, who had done a brother's part, in his affliction, to her imprisoned son.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOVE the northern quarter of the town of Liverpool rises a gentle hill, with the square tower of a church crowning its highest elevation, and houses, great and small, climbing its sides. This suburb is Everton, high up in whose village street you will find an uncouth cottage, said to have concealed the fiery Rupert once, after he had lost a battle, and near it are places more distinguished, where the world may obtain that

production of genius (there are few productions of genius in Liverpool) the renowned Toffee of Everton. Some ten or fifteen years ago, the terraced houses of Everton were all great houses, looking down upon Liverpool, smoke-shrouded at their feet, and upon the great river and the sea; and there, in the flaming ocean waters, after the narrower river had grown pale and grey, gay groups at those high windows saw the sun go down, and ships glide, spectre-like, across his disk, like the nightmare ship in the Mariner's Vision. But the aristocrats of Liverpool have gone away southward, now, where they can look out upon trim, flat fields, and square yards of ornamented water, and have left the sea, with its grand sunsets, and that one Liverpool mount of vision, to the enjoyment of the poor.

And now little streets, in long lines, climb

the hill; some of them pausing half way up, as if wearied with the ascent; some broken up in little rows, with diverse names; some mounting to the top in one long, unbroken line, but all very indifferent to the view, and turning their backs on it for the most part. Two-storied, blue-slated houses, each with a plot before its door, like a green table-cover laid out in the sun—all snug—all small—and all with Welsh landlords.

So entirely so, that it seems a national characteristic; and you are almost secure in prophesying, if you watch those healthful people of the Principality, with their round, ruddy faces, trooping into their dingy chapel on Sabbath mornings, that every fifth father among them has built, or meditates building, a little row of houses somewhere in Everton or Kirkdale. Comfortable to live in—very comfortable to receive rent for; but Mrs. Wyld shakes her

head as she looks at this one, and thinks sixteen pounds a-year is a very great rent to give.

Look in: the front parlour, and a very little bed-closet up stairs, are let to a young couple, who have their own furniture, and are very quiet, and keep no babies. So you must walk straight along that very narrow lobby, on which Mrs. Wyld has laid a still narrower strip of bright-painted oil-cloth, and which threatens to shipwreck you on the steep flight of stairs beyond; but there is the kitchen door standing open, a harbour of refuge, and you go in.

It is summer, but the fire is not obtrusive; it rarely is in a kitchen; and the grate is very black, and the hearth very white, and the fender clear, as ever was polished steel. The floor is very clean too, but it is not white; it is a sort of homely mosaic, red and black, in

quaint lozenges, which look comfortable and cool, "and genteel," as Mrs. Taylor in the parlour says. An oblong deal table, scoured very white, stands by the window, and on it Mrs. Wyld is folding up her newly-dried clothes, which still have an odour of fresh air about them, for the mangle. By the side of the table Rachel sits sewing. She is not at all beautiful, but she has a good, ingenuous, pure-looking face, intelligent and grave, but not knowing; and her light brown hair is braided on a cheek, firm and smooth, though almost colourless, for Rachel is quite healthy in body and mind, though, sitting constantly at her needle as she does, not very strong. Her dress is a pretty clear lilac print, with a white linen collar, and a brown linen apron. Rachel is a dressmaker, and scraps of the dark-coloured gown she is making lie on the window-sill and the table.

How quick her needle goes! She will get three shillings for making that gown, for it is to have flounces, and a good deal of work upon it, and, sitting from seven or eight in the morning to nearly twelve at night, it will take a full day and a half to finish. But Rachel thinks she is very well paid.

And now Mrs. Wyld draws that small round table into the centre of the room, and arranges the tea-things; and now some one knocks at the door. Mrs. Taylor in the parlour opens it, for it is her husband, and she too has got tea ready; and along with Mrs. Taylor's husband, comes Mrs. Wyld's lodger. He does look a good fellow, as Mr. Shafton called him; for his blue eyes are frank, honest, and wide open, and his lips, and his teeth, revealed by that good-humoured smile of his, look remarkably clear and clean in contrast with his some-

what smutted face. He takes off his cap as he comes in, and hangs it up in the lobby, and, now lingering a moment in the kitchen, plunges into the little scullery beyond, while Mrs. Wyld fills up her teapot, and prepares to make tea. By the time she has the sugar in the cups, the scullery door again opens, and John Drayton reappears with a burnished, shining face. His moleskin suit is only a little blackened—he put it on snow-white and spotless on Monday—and he has had time, after performing his ablutions, to arrange his hair too, by aid of the looking-glass in the scullery; and now the three teacups are filled, and the three chairs placed at the table, and a very comfortable and cheerful meal is the working man's tea.

Great changes there have been in the interval between this tranquil evening, and the night of John Drayton's release from

prison. Now, though in a field not far from the house, you can see, glancing under the sunshine, the white tents of the soldiers sent for to preserve the peace, and not yet provided with any more permanent shelter, the town has long settled into complete tranquillity, and smiles at its apprehension of danger. Like froth, the momentary ebullition has subsided, melted into the peaceful waters far below.

It was not thought necessary to visit the would-be rebels with severe punishment. Wyld and some others were sentenced to a few months' imprisonment, and Charlie Smith, and other such runaways, were kept in terror and concealment for a short time by the kind inquiries of the police, but there was never any decided search made for them; they were suffered to escape.

Dutifully when Wyld's term of imprison-

ment had expired, his wife and Rachel went to meet him, and bring him home. He was kind enough in his careless, lordly way at first, but after a few lounging days spent at home, his humour changed, and he became dissatisfied and discontented. So at length he made up his mind to leave the country. The sailor son, George, had been home during his imprisonment, and had given his mother a few pounds hard-earned and painfully saved money. It was enough, and just enough, to pay his passage to America; and there the orator said he would go. There, there was full scope for every man—liberty, equality; and to the land of freedom and of slaves—a fit asylum—he went. In case he liked the country, and made sufficient money, he would send, he promised, for his wife and daughter; and until that time—after the parting was over at which Mrs.

Wyld dropt some natural tears—they were very well content to be left alone.

And so John Drayton transferred himself into their household; and they left the close, dark court for the light and air of the suburban street. It kept them very hard at work to maintain their little *ménage*, and Rachel indefatigably made gowns, and Mrs. Wyld did little bits of washing for young clerks, and other such, lodgers in the houses near them, and took in plain sewing besides; altogether, they just managed to have tea and bread and butter enough, and a rather scanty supply of more substantial things.

The tea was over, and Rachel returned to her work. Mrs. Taylor, in the parlour, had just taken her husband out for a walk, but Rachel could not afford to spend the evening so. With her foot upon a little wooden stool, and some breadths of the dark stuff

she was working at pinned to her knee, she was making the heavy, deep flounces of this wearisome gown; and Mrs. Wyld at the other end of the table, having despatched her clothes to the mangle, had begun to work at some red flannel-shirts, which she had got from an outfitting shop. They put her in mind of poor George, out on the sea, working for his bread; but she had no time to waste in sighing, so busily she laboured on.

"I think, I'll go out, and have a walk," said John Drayton; "it's a beautiful night."

But John did not go; he stood before the table, and put his hands in his pockets, and looked through the window at the sunshine, creeping in its long slant line down the wall, and into the very little paved yard behind.

Rachel, however, was not to be tempted by

the sunshine, for many a dreary stitch was before her, and John changed his mind.

"I dare say, I won't after all; I'll stay at home to-night."

So he went to the cupboard in the corner, and opened the door; the lower shelves were full of shining plates and cups, Mrs. Wyld's whole stock of crockery; the upper shelf was miscellaneous. John stood on a chair, and brought down a number of unbound books, not very clean, some of them. One or two were his own, the rest were borrowed from his foundry friends; he chose one, not the "Constitution of Man," though it was there, but a novel—a novel of the "Mysteries" class, illustrated with startling wood-cuts, and rich in scenes and sentiments no less astonishing. With this in his hand, John drew a chair to the front of the table, and began to read.

To read under the eyes of women—one a good mother, the other a pure, unwitting girl; they did not know what miserable stuff was within that printed cover—neither did he, as he gulped it down. He knew that these books sold by the thousand, and that Robison, and a great many besides Robison, thought them "capital reading." Something within him had revolted at first from those records of corruption, but very soon that was lost in the thirst for reading which they awakened. The pure and graceful literature of the day was not within John's reach. He liked to read, and at every street-corner he could lay his hands on these.

So there was silence for awhile in the little kitchen, unbroken except by the flying pace of Rachel's needle, and the slower motion of her mother's, as it was dragged

unwillingly through the thick folds of the red flannel.

"Rachel," said Mrs. Wyld, at length beginning a little gossip, in a subdued voice, not to disturb John, for Mrs. Wyld had a reverence for books, and scarcely thought people could be harmed by reading, "Rachel, don't you think Mrs. Miller's son ought to be better to his mother?"

"Is he not good to her, mother?" said Rachel.

"Well, I don't know: he never likes to see a neighbour come near her, and when anybody calls on him, they're put into the parlour; and he never says, this is my mother. I suppose he's ashamed of her, because she's a homely body, poor thing; but it's a bad sign, that, of a lad."

"And what is he?" said John, looking up.

"Did I never tell you?" said Mrs. Wyld, pausing a moment, in the satisfaction of having something to tell now. "He was a shopman once in a cloth-shop down town—a *man's* shop, you know, not a draper's—and he was clever, and his master took notice of him; he's a deacon in the chapel up the Brow, is the master; and from less to more, he went on taking notice of young Miller, till he subscribed himself, and got more to subscribe, and sent him to the college at Manchester to learn to be a minister; and sure enough, very clever he's turned out, they say. He's been there a long while; he'll soon be out of his time, I hear, and then he'll preach; but I don't like his look, and I'm sure he might be better to his mother. I wouldn't like it, I know, if he was my son; but poor George,

if he was the richest man that ever was, wouldn't do that to me."

"It's always the way with those canting people," said John.

"But he's not one of the canting people," said Rachel, quickly; "he's far too cold and clever for that. Miss Jane is, and Mr. Shafton is, I think, but not this student,—oh, no!"

"I never heard Mr. Shafton cant," said John. "I believe, though maybe he's not very clever, he's as good a man as ever lived—and I never heard him cant."

"Did you ever hear anybody cant?" said Rachel, with a little heat.

John hesitated; he had heard a great deal about cant; it struck him, for the first time, just then, that he had never heard the thing itself.

"Doesn't Mr. Bruce, the clerk, live up this way, John?" said Mrs. Wyld.

"He lives at the top of the hill, just a little way above us," said John. "Mr. Shafton and he are getting great friends; but Mr. Bruce is a straitlaced, old-fashioned man, and talks about going to church. He's clever, too, but he's Scotch, and that's the great mistake with all those Scotch."

Rachel sighed; she had begun to learn it was no such great mistake after all.

The evening had worn away, and it grew too dark for sewing.

"We'll have to light the candle, mother," said Rachel.

"Wait a bit, Rachel," said Mrs. Wyld, looking up at the sky; "it's too light yet to be burning candles."

But it was too dark to sew; so Rachel laid aside her work for a moment, and took

up the book which John had laid down upon the table. He watched her with a little unconscious curiosity. She opened it where he had folded down a leaf. Her eyes went quickly over the long double column; she turned the page, and went on; then she closed the book and put it away to a distance from her on the table, with a slight abhorrent motion, and looked him, for a moment, full in the face. A strange, wondering, appealing look it was, ending in a great flush of sudden colour, indignantly mounting to her very hair; and then Rachel hurriedly rose, and took the candlestick from the mantel-piece, where it served the purpose of an ornament through the day; but after the little light was placed on the table, and she had commenced, with rapid fingers, to her work again, Rachel still remained silent. The conversation dropped, and John, with a

feeling of guilt, stole away the novel, and timidly took down the "Constitution of Man;" but he read no more that night.

"John," said Rachel, with a slight shake, half sorrowful, half angry, in her voice, when her mother had gone up stairs to do some trifling business there, "was ever any man good who was not religious?"

It was a puzzling question.

"I don't know what you call good, Rachel," said the culprit John.

And Rachel paused to think of some other way of aiming covertly at the book, of which she was ashamed to speak.

"I see you are angry; what's the matter, Rachel?" said John, with more boldness.

Two or three attempts Rachel made to restrain herself, but at last fell into a great passion of sobs and tears.

"Don't, John—oh, John, like a good fellow, don't!"

"Don't what, Rachel?" said John, in alarm, drawing nearer.

"Don't shut yourself out from it all; if there was never another world at all, John, don't throw away all that's good in this. Oh, if you would only think of it! Would Mr. Bruce read that book, or Mr. Shafton? and you should be as good as them; but you laugh at them for reading the Bible. Oh, John, don't!"

"I won't any more," said John. He drew himself up with a feeling of kind superiority; he would humour their prejudices for Rachel's sake.

"I'd rather die this instant, knowing the Bible to be true, than live a thousand years and not believe it," said Rachel, drying her tears.

He looked into her face, and in her face he read that what she said was *true*—true as her trembling, living, human heart—not a cold, abstract thing to speak about; something alive, loved, trusted, known.

"But *I* can't think it's true—it contradicts itself," said John, a chillness gathering about his heart.

"I once read in a book at Miss Jane's," said Rachel, "a Dream. He was a German that had written it; he dreamed there was no God, and it's horrible—horrible to read it, John, how he felt while he dreamed; and then he wakened, with people singing psalms, and everybody rejoicing, and he knew that God was, and he was happy."

Poor John Drayton! his self-complacent satisfaction with his scepticism all fell away—the old unhappy doubts gnawed at

his heart again—he felt cold, guilty, solitary; for God was not to him.

"If I get the book, will you read it?" said Rachel. "If I get books from Miss Jane—high books, the ones great men have written—will you read them, John?"

And John faintly promised as he put the "Constitution of Man" away.

CHAPTER IX.

NEXT day at the dinner hour, when John was leaving the foundry, Mr. Shafton came up to him. A singular friendship had sprung up between the two young men; Mr. Shafton always bashful, almost timid in his kindness—John with a certain tenderness in his respect. The ornaments were gradually disappearing from the dress of the rich clerk, but had he covered himself with jewels, the young mechanic

no longer would have envied him; for John, in respecting Mr. Shafton, strangely found that he ceased to be Mr. Shafton's inferior, and only the more respected himself. How? not as rich merchant's son and poor artizan did they hold converse now—the one arrayed in class antagonism against the other—but as two youthful men, born brothers—thinking, feeling, loving, enduring, as all men do alike.

"Drayton, here's something for you. Never mind, don't look at it now," said Mr. Shafton, sliding a little paper packet into John's hand, and hurrying off, with blushes and trepidation, as if he had done a crime. With some curiosity, John unrolled it. Within was a card of membership for the Mechanics' Institution, admitting to the lectures and library, and to some of the evening classes. Overpowered, John

hurriedly looked round for his friend; but Mr. Shafton, walking as if for a race, was already far ahead of him, afraid of being thanked.

It was another era in the life of John. Already he had been at evening classes, for writing and arithmetic, and the simpler branches of education, and had frequently attended lectures, patronized by Robison, where various objections to the Bible were triumphantly proved in the absence of all gainsayers, and intelligent, enlightened working men, satisfied that the whole system of Christianity was effete and antiquated, and that they themselves, sitting in calm superiority as a jury to judge its pretensions, were much too elevated and intellectual to be judged by it in turn. But these lectures, after all, were very slow sometimes, and John could perceive that the

lecturers were at least not "gentlemen." This "grand old name of gentleman," much scoffed at as it may be, has still an immense weight with the working man, in spite of his class arrogance, especially in the matter of teaching. The Mechanics' Institution was an imposing name; and, when he thought of its well-paid teachers and great library, John felt that he was entering a new world.

And Rachel Wyld listened to all his exultation when he went home, and praised Mr. Shafton with a tear in her eye. Some little volumes, carefully covered with white paper, were lying in the window-sill beside Rachel, but John did not observe them in his tumult of joy. At night, when he had got tea, he went hastily to his room, and began to "clean" himself with especial care and assiduity; and when he came

down again, with his Sunday short frock-coat and his Sunday hat, and went away glowing and happy to the Institution, Rachel put her books aside with a sigh. That day she had borrowed them from Miss Jane, and, in pleasant anticipation of the evening, had carefully put these covers on them. One of the volumes contained the wonderful "Dream" of Jean Paul; another was Wordsworth, whose "Margaret" Rachel had wept over, when she was working for Miss Jane, without at all discussing the question whether the Excursion was a great poem or not. Wordsworth, with his lofty, pure religious atmosphere—with simple art, Rachel had chosen *him* rather than the greater Milton, whom she did not understand or like so well; and she thought the great poet, who wrote of the poor, would gain the good-

will of John, and the pure mountain air that was in his book would charm the young sceptic's heart.

Poor Rachel! she had no time herself to read again the story of Margaret. She put the precious books carefully away, and could almost have cried; for the quiet evenings, of which she had dreamed, and the gradual leavening of John's mind, with things good and noble, vanished into the distance and melted away.

Mr. Shafton's benevolence had not a good issue this time, so far as the home was concerned. Night after night, John Drayton spent the long hours at the Institution; night after night, Rachel and her mother sat alone and sewed. They had become so much accustomed to him, that they missed him sadly now, and the fancies which once had stolen into Rachel's mind,

of a future household, paled and faded; for it did not so greatly matter after all what was the cause of his absence, when he was absent continually, and Rachel's kindly heart was chilled and grew languid. She—prisoned thus in that little room, with no evenings for relaxation, and only glad that she could get work enough to keep her weary hands constantly toiling—she began to think, with a little bitterness of the leisure of John.

John was becoming a draughtsman—John was learning French—and to courses of lectures without number eagerly listened John. They gave him a great many new ideas; they taught him how wonderful this age was, above all ages; they showed him how the steam engine, and the electric telegraph, and homœopathy, and hydropathy, and universal brotherhood, were bringing in

the golden age—the grand utopian time—the apotheosis of man.

And from these lectures John returned to the foundry, and saw the chaotic world of humanity there; saw these young men crowding in the workshops; heard them talk—alas! not loftily, not purely. Sometimes it was low grovelling vice, sometimes small gossipry about their sweethearts, and "what he said," and "what she said," sometimes hot weak controversy, sound and fury, signifying nothing; the old national quarrel between Englishmen and Scotchmen perhaps, or a debate maintained by one vehement teetotaller against a host of laughing assailants. The teetotaller held, and defended almost furiously, the absolute perfection of his plan, and so did the partisans of the steam engine and the electric telegraph; but what did it all produce?

Something of a shadowy ideal began to form in John's mind—an ideal which he imagined now could be created by some galvanic mental force, as in his first stage he had fancied it could be by political. The savage natural virtues, the generosity and daring, and pride of uprightness; these surely were here at least, the seed and germ of the new perfect social state. No; many other young men were there like himself, gathering in knowledge into restless unsatisfied minds, and seeking in others that realization of the perfect which no one was bold enough to believe he found in himself; but the world was a collection of units still, and each in his imperfect unsatisfied self was a concentrated world.

But how was it to come, this blessed time?

"My brothers," said the lecturer fervently,

"show yourselves brotherly; trust to no help from without; the higher classes of society are opening their eyes to see your wants and care for your wishes; but yourselves must redeem yourselves. Young men, the future is in your hands; fight for it—win it; evolve it clear and bright out of the unseen, and go deliver your brother! Who is grovelling, lift him up; who is ignorant, bring him to be taught; who is vicious, teach him that in purity and honour is the strength and pride of man; for the time is coming when all the world shall be one brotherhood; when intelligence and knowledge shall be universally diffused; when to coerce and enslave shall be possible no longer; and when the native dignity and nobleness of man—as man—shall be acknowledged wherever a human being breathes the breath of this wonderful life."

"Righteousness shall run down her streets like a stream—"

John did not know why, or how, that verse of the long disused, forgotten Bible came floating into his ear like a stray note of music. Righteousness! but it was of knowledge the lecturer spoke.

"Every man for himself—for his brother; and the Press for us all."

A grander cadence there was, indeed, in this proverb, when David Bruce spoke it; but no one here named the name of God.

And stirred by what he heard, John's spirit rose. He, too, would go forth a missionary. A missionary! the word had disagreeable associations; he had been used to sneer at it, and to hear it sneered at; but he would redeem the name. Among those young associates of his he, too, would

begin to exert the influence, which the lecturer said every individual in a greater or less degree possessed, and he would exert it to elevate, to make noble, to assert the original dignity of man.

"But ye'll mind it's only some men," said Robison, when, at the Temperance Coffee-house, John communicated to him his enthusiastic feelings. "Ye'll mind a'body's no capable of grand ideas. There's some men that would sooner part with every stitch of the claes that's on their body, than loosen one article of the prejudices that they wear for claes upon their mind. There's the Development theory; now, I think it's just one of the grandest notions that ever entered the human intelleck; but, someway, it gangs against the grain; and even men that ye would think had gey weel weeded out the auld bairnly fancies about heaven, canna

stamack the idea that they themselves have gradually grown out of fishes, and puddocks, and monkeys; but it's a grand scheme, that Development theory."

"I don't know, Robison," said John. "Is it a good way, do you think, to make men honourable and noble, to tell them they're just the same stuff as monkeys?"

"Weel, I'll no say," said Robison, with a low laugh, "that it's just a'thegither the plan for that; though mony ane of them proves his paternity, and is the image of his forbear; but atween you and me, John, my lad, you'll no make much of that honourable and noble. It'll no answer, man — it'll never do; ye'll get one in twenty whiles, and whiles no one in a hundred; but as a general thing, it'll never do."

"Maybe not, in past times," said John,

with a little heat; "but there never was an age like this before. Look at the progress of intellect everywhere; see how the world's getting on: and there's a development theory in mind as well as in physics, Robison. There must be perfect happiness sometime; but we'll need to grow a deal better before that comes."

"Ay," said Robison, meditatively, as he stirred his coffee, and pushed away with his elbow a parcel of penny papers, "ye're in the right there, John, lad. Happy!—man, I mind being happy ance myself!"

"Are you not happy now, Robison?" said John, for the tone of his companion at once awed and interested him.

"What does it signify? wha was speaking about happiness?" said the sceptic, quickly resuming his former manner. "It's a' lees; and being honourable and noble's

a lee, and the haill world's a lee; haud your peace, John Drayton—I ken better than you, and there's nothing but lees in this life."

"In *this* life, Robison?" said his disciple scornfully.

"Ay laddie, in *this* life; are ye mocking me?" said the unbeliever, "and what if there were ither lives before this, though there may be nane afterhand. There was ance a callant, bred up in the Gallowgate of Glasgow. I've seen him on Glasgow Green on a sunny afternoon, that he didna ken whether he was in earth or heaven, —for he believed in heaven then—and paidling in the Clyde, and swimming ower't with the sun glancing on the waves, and the water like silk on his skin, and no a thought of ill in his head; I wish he

had ga'en down—I wish to God he had ga'en down that day!"

And the heavy eyebrows worked up and down, and the eyelids were puckered in; John almost thought to restrain a tear.

"But that's a' blethers," resumed Robison quickly, "and I'm a fuil—a'body's fuils. So how are ye gaun to begin this grand enterprise of yours, John."

"It's not so easy that," said John hesitating. "You might do something, Robison, you've lots of influence."

"Me!" There was another low sneering laugh. "I have nae particular credit of my handiwark, John. A parcel of the greatest scamps that ever were turned out of a moulder's shop, my lads have been; there's no a decent one among

them but yoursel. Na, I'm a destructive genius, John. I'm no a building up man."

And John thought of the time when Charlie Smith spoke of this same Robison as a great scamp, and when he admired and wondered; and the disciple like the master, remembered that then he was happy; so happy as to be unconscious of his happiness.

"It's a grand thing to be a man in this world," said John paraphrasing unwittingly a bit of the last lecture. "To feel such powers as we have, to be able to reach such heights if we like to try: for man is the king and God of all the animals, Robison—"

"Ay, he's a graceless vagabond, nae doubt about him," said Robison with his scoffing laugh, "setting up to be of a superior

race to his auld father the monkey, and his far away forbear the puddock; but we should be dutiful, and keep our origin in mind."

"Robison," exclaimed John, impatiently, "I'll tell you what I think—I can't help thinking it. It's far more natural that men should try to be noble and pure, because they think God made them, as the children say, than because they came from monkeys and frogs; and it's a grander idea, too."

But Robison's sentimentalism was gone. Again his jarring laugh disturbed John's temper.

"Weel, maybe you're right; I wouldna say that I a'thegither deny a First Cause mysel."

And so he turned to his penny papers—his police reports—and was lost in them; the good and the bad—all that he might

have been and all that he was—were buried beneath the miserable garbage of those broad-sheets: and John turned away indefinitely saddened. Alas! for the dignity of man!

CHAPTER X.

He was not much of a metaphysical man, this missionary John. The "why?" was not quite the natural state of his mind; so, rejecting speculations about the cause and origin of the evil which he saw everywhere surrounding him, he began conscientiously to act up to his newly-formed convictions, and try to lessen it. He began by endeavouring to restrain conversation positively bad in the workshop. There were many

others there who went like himself to the Mechanics' Institution; but, wonderfully as he thought, none of them seemed stirred like himself to the rescue of their neighbours—nor to their own rescue, indeed; for there was very little difference between them and their more ignorant companions.

Nevertheless, some of them *were* metaphysical men—the born critic and caviller, whose weapon of offence and defence is this "why?" had various representatives in the foundry; so many, that this species of intellect, certainly not the highest, became generally recognised as the type of young working man intelligence. Very different was the formation of John Drayton, of whose honest, straightforward mind you might almost have said that it had body as well as soul.

"I say, Jack, you're getting a great bore," said one of his companions; "let's talk as we like, and have done with that. He's

getting an old hypocrite, like Cooper, the foreman."

"Well, they don't talk like that in the office," said John; "and you'll say that you're as good as Mr. Bruce and Mr. Shafton, I'm sure."

"I should be as good as Bruce anyway. I have got more wages, for all the airs he gives himself," said the first speaker.

"But I tell you he talks very different," reiterated John. "He talks sense, and like a gentleman. We've got heads as well as them; why shouldn't we talk as sensible as any gentleman in the land?"

No one was prepared to answer the question, so there was a general laugh to cover the general inability.

"When did you join the Methodys, John?" asked another. "You didn't use to be such a particular man; but I suppose you've begun to speak at meeting now?"

"I've joined no Methodys," said John, indignantly; "but I'd rather be among a set of men that knew what they were about, whatever they were, than with a parcel of swine — you might be that, for your talk—"

"Give us a subject, Jack," cried one of his class-mates at the Institution. "Come, let's think we're at a debating society. Give us a subject, Drayton?"

"Stop a bit, till I tell you the news," said another. "Robison, your great friend, Jack, has been teetotal, you know, for ever so long; but he's broke his pledge, and has been off work all this week drinking. Tom Clinker, that he works with, is as bad as him; he used to be such a fierce teetotaller, and now he's never sober a night; so he can't find fault with Robison."

And so there began a gossip about masters,

and about workmen, the whole fluctuating world in which they lived. How one had money in Building Societies and Loan Societies, and was growing rich; and how another had to borrow from these same Loan Funds, and drained by interest and usurious charges, was dwindling into miserable poverty; gossip—little personalities—but nothing elevated, or intellectual, could John introduce into the conversation of the workshop.

"Why the horses, if they could talk, would talk as well," said John, within himself; "and why should we be so coarse and ignorant?"

But he would not give the effort up; he would hold by them, he had determined, and exhaust every means before he relinquished the idea of elevating his brethren.

"Why, George, you're a man," said the remonstrant John; "you're the king of this

world; you have got a mind, and a language to tell what you think in; and yet you will go and drink at night, and quarrel and talk nonsense through the day. What's the good of it all? If God made you, He didn't make you to go and disgrace yourself; it's not in reason; you're a man, and you're bound to be as good a one as you can."

"I'm a man, and I've a right to do what I like," retorted George Harrison. "What's your business what I do? and what do you know about God or good men either?"

Not much indeed. Sorrowfully John began to discover that good men were very rare, and hard to be found.

"Well, will you come to the Mechanics' Exhibition to-night?" said John; "I'm going, and so's a lot more of us."

"I don't mind if I do," said young

Harrison; "they say it's worth seeing; but *you* go every night, don't you, to hear lectures and stuff?"

John drew himself up.

"Yes, I go every night: why don't you come? It's on purpose for mechanics like us, you know, to give us as much education as gentlemen have; and there's a library, that you can get books out of. I'm at the drawing class just now, and at French; why don't you come?"

"I'm hard enough worked already," said George; "do you think I'm going to make a black slave of myself, after being in the foundry all day? What's the night for, if it isn't for a little pleasure? I don't want to be any more at school. I've got as much learning as I'll ever need, *I* know."

And the young social reformer turned away and sighed; for George Harrison

envied nothing about a gentleman but his wealth and his idleness.

The exhibition at the Mechanics' Institution was something like a dwarf model of the Great Exhibition. There was a picture gallery, and a sculpture room, and there were engines and galvanic batteries, and models of all sorts of inventions, and curiosities from many countries. There were printers, too, and lithographers, and other such handicraftsmen exhibiting their art, and supplying mementos of the show, and greatly frequented it was.

Very gaily the band of young mechanics set out for their evening's enjoyment. Some of them in short frock coats, like John's—some with jackets—all particularly clean, and looking very spruce, with the blue cloth cap dropped lightly over the well-brushed curls. They were all young, not any of

them over five and twenty, and with their faces shining and burnished from their late toilet, and, lighted up with pleasant anticipations, they looked a very hopeful, promising group. Why, oh why, pathetically thought John Drayton, should they not all think and speak like gentlemen?

But John, the reformer, was greatly pleased that evening. Some of them showed themselves quite learned and intelligent over these model steam engines; they all admired the pictures; they all enjoyed themselves; and, though the rooms were a little crowded, and some of the sights not remarkably "instructive," the exhibition had a great deal of rational pleasure in it, and was worthy of the many anticipations with which its annual opening was hailed.

"Well now, George, don't you feel better

than if you had been wasting your time somewhere in a public-house or a singing room," said John, as they left the Institution.

"It was first-rate to-night," said the well-pleased George; "if it was like that every night, I don't care how often I went."

"It's only ten," said another, "come along in here a bit; only just listen to that music."

"Don't go; you'll just begin to drink, and get into some row," pleaded John.

"Oh, don't be always preaching. I'll only stop half an hour; come along with us yourself, and see."

And John went—to take care of his young companions; to persuade them how little pleasure there was in this dissipation, in comparison with the more intellectual enjoyments they had just left.

Desecrated music floated out through the open windows, and rung over the beer-stained tables in that brilliantly-lighted upper room; and the company listened and stamped with their feet, and shouted with their voices in applause. Strange influence, half brutal, half divine; sanctified in the highest acts of worship, degraded into the lowest instrument of vice; the breath of sweet sounds was the temptation there—the bait of the hook which caught so many rude incoherent souls.

And John Drayton entered in his sublime capacity of protector, to take care of these lads—to advise and control and restrain them; to deliver them out of the net of the fowler.

Another hour, and John has forgotten; another, and he has fallen. Not any more the proud, dignified, intellectual man; not any more the wise and careful guardian, the

social reformer. Lower, meaner, than the lads whom he sought to make gentlemen: stammering blasphemy over those poor pale lips of his; imbecile, drivelling, degraded, the proud John Drayton staggered home.

Upstairs in her little chamber Rachel Wyld hears his loud summons at the door; tremblingly hears her mother admit him; and learning from the pitiful changed voice, as it echoes through the house, how and in what condition John has come home, lays her aching head down on her pillow, and that pale fading cheek of hers is fretted with salt tears. All day long has Rachel laboured, for her own bread and for her mother's, and much need has that slight, girlish frame for rest, but rest will not come. She thinks he too, another young hopeful life, has fallen into the mire and has been lost; and bitterly, with tears and silent pleading, she

cries to heaven through these nightwatches for help to the transgressor.

And the morning comes—the slow, cold, remorseless morning, waking the mourners—the fallen—all to whom unconsciousness is a blessing, to knowledge of the real world again. Poor weepers for the dead who have been dreaming of joy, awake, and remember that they are desolate. Poor sinners start from their uneasy slumbers, and hide their faces, and abhor themselves. A new beginning to the anguish of the bereaved—a new revulsion of shame to the disgraced—how many chambers in how many lands beheld such awaking as John's.

At first, with a kind of desperate hope that it was all a dream, he looked out on the bright blank sunshine streaming full into his room. The morning was much

further advanced than his usual hour of rising he saw, and an idea that it was Sunday crept into his mind. He did not care to investigate whether it was so or not for the first few minutes; a vague remembrance of the happy, tranquil Sabbath-days he used to spend at home, came over him with a secret pang; for John seldom went home on Sunday now, and long for him it had ceased to be a day of rest.

Ten o'clock—he counts the slow strokes, as Mrs. Wyld's little American clock strikes the hour. Ten—but no church bells are ringing in the sunny air; the sounds of common labour are rising without, and the young wife downstairs sings at her work. The innocent, happy voice strikes him to the heart as he hears it, and John Drayton

hides his face in his hands in an agony of shame.

Alas for the degraded man! alas for the unhappy, imperfect nature, akin to angels and to devils; aspiring to the highest good, and staining its garments in the lowest ill! He could have wept, but that something more painful than weeping kept his burning eyelids dry; and he covered his head once more—that head which he fancied he could never lift up again in the pure light of day.

By and bye he is dressed, and steals down stairs like a criminal. The fire looks brighter than usual, and the little kitchen in more solemn order; and Rachel sits at the window making mourning, with deep folds of crape about her thin, white, busy hands. On the little round table

his breakfast is prepared, and Mrs. Wyld within that open scullery door, stands starching linen, and preparing for her ironing. He hears no conversation as he steals in, and Rachel looks very pale, and there are dark lines under her eyes. She casts a hurried glance up at him, and then turns away her head and looks steadily down at her work again, as though she were afraid that he should see her paleness and her suppressed tears. But John does perceive them with one of the instincts of his humiliation, and he groans within himself as he sits down idly by the fire.

And now Mrs. Wyld comes to give him breakfast; as she fills his cup with coffee, very grave and sad and admonitive is the look John feels upon him, and he thinks that to be reproved would be a relief;

but she says nothing—and now he is left in the silence to take breakfast, and loathing it, pushes the wholesome loaf away. Quietly Mrs. Wyld comes and goes, and Rachel's quick needle makes itself heard in the stillness—stillness which is torture to John.

"Will none of you speak to me," he said, spreading his hands over the fire, and looking up with heavy pitiful eyes; and Rachel's hand hurriedly steals up to her cheek to brush off that tear, lest it should fall upon the crape and mark it; crape which has no chance perhaps of being stained by such a genuine drop of grief again.

"What can I say to you, John?" said Mrs. Wyld. "I couldn't be more grieved if you were my own boy."

And John bent down his head upon his knee, and shut out from his eyes, the painful upbraiding light.

And so he sat through all the day, hiding his face in bitter shame, long after they had forgiven, and tried to comfort him; he could not forgive himself—and the sound of Mrs. Wyld's iron as she smoothed the snowy linen, and the quick flight of Rachel's needle, reproached him every moment. The day was lost for him; all others round him, were pursuing their healthful usual work; filling up its hours with wholesome thought and useful labour—only for him it passed in a fever and was lost.

At night he wandered listlessly through the lighted streets. Wherever he went, sin seemed to stare him in the face. Here was a crowd collected round two furious

men, glaring hate and malice on each other; there about the blazing doors of a great temple of intemperance were unhappy groups, tempters and tempted, continually coming and going; young men of his own mechanic class, and of a class higher than his, went about in loud bands, and disappeared into lanes and alleys, and through those fatal doors, constantly swinging to and fro; youthful women with miserable fair faces, lowest and most degraded of all, infected the street like a pestilence: and gay artificial light, and wild unhappy laughter, and music—everywhere music—were floating over all.

And above was the calm, undisturbed unclouded sky, with its young moon looking down serene and pure, upon the turbulent unquiet world. John turned aside into a mean and dirty, but comparatively quiet

street, sick at heart. To reclaim this world —to make house-mothers, good and happy, of those squalid wretched women, to whose skirts unhappy infants, with faces like old men, clung in the noisy thoroughfare. To make *men* of the riotous demons yonder—to grasp the weak with strong hands, lifting them out of this pollution, and give them, strength to stand erect with their faces towards heaven as men should stand—who was sufficient for these things? who could purify a single human soul?

His heart was faint within him with conscious powerlessness. He had failed—failed to keep his own honour pure, his own resolution unbroken; and these, swarming thousands as he saw them to be, for whose welfare no man cared—what hope was for them? He was pacing up and down the

narrow, dirty pavement, looking in through uncurtained windows into wretched households, too far degraded to think of concealing their degradation; and as he looked, bitter fancies filled his heart. Was there then a God—as Robison said, a First Cause, sublimely passive up yonder beyond the shining heavens, and with power to create, having no power to mollify or reform. He felt the want of something in the sceptic's scheme of life: the strong Hand to confide himself to—the Omnipotent Power to invoke, if it were in very bitterness—the Great Spirit to cry aloud to in the anguish of this universal sin.

Just then an open door attracted him—down the long stair to which it gave admittance came a hum of voices; John went up listlessly, scarce knowing why.

That other door is ajar above, but John

stands still arrested by a voice — a shy youthful voice, which once before in its hesitating simple tones carried gladness to his heart.

"Thou, Lord Jesus, who gave it, bless the children's bread—and let thy name be a strong tower to them, keeping them from evil. Give them the pure hearts which shall see God; bless them as thou didst bless the children on whom thou laid'st thy hands: and forgive our sins for thy name's sake, and because thou hast died and art alive again, and livest for evermore."

There is a momentary hush, and then louder sounds within. John Drayton does not hear them very clearly, for tears have gathered into his eyes, and he leans feebly against the wall. This Jesus, this heavenly

King, who is human and pitiful in his Godhead as a man. Was it, indeed, true that he had died and was alive?

Groping in his great darkness, he cannot see, but there is something tender and merciful in the very name; and he opens the door blindly, with an instinctive hope, that there will be help within.

It is a long bare room, with no furniture but one table, and forms surrounding it; although human furniture abounds. On each side of the table is a row of pinafored urchins, discussing their simple supper. Some of the little faces are very sharp—many of them pinched and pale; but secret smiles and whispered mirth circulate through the ranks, and the tin porringers clatter merrily, and the small keen appetites relish the homely fare. That respetable teacher, at the foot of

the table, is anxious to keep order. "Boys, boys," he says, deprecatingly, now and then; but Mr. Shafton, at the head, looks happily round on all the mirthful murmurs, and meets the small appealing eyes that wander to his face, with such a smile as only encourages the bashful laughter. Very young still, and perhaps not very clever, he looks as he sits there, making a little joke for the privileged youngsters beside him; but John shrinks into himself, and feels very mean, and small, and despicable, as he recollects where he spent the last night, and how Mr. Shafton spends this.

"Is it you, Drayton?" said Mr. Shafton, hurrying up to him. "I've wanted long to have you here. I'm sure, you could help us, if you would. Isn't it delightful to see the little wretches? they might have been

growing up thieves and villains, out in that miserable street; but with God's help, we'll try to make them Christians, and men!"

CHAPTER XI.

"CHRISTIANS and men!" Little, poor, ragged outcasts, children of fathers and mothers, over whom the tenderest charity hopelessly sighed as irreclaimable—born heirs of hereditary vice, poverty, disease, and shame—far below the reach of Mechanics' institutions, or even schools at three pence a week—even these—these it was possible might be made Christians and men.

And Rachel Wyld's question rang again

in the ears of John: "Were there ever any good men who were not religious?" but he could not answer "yes."

For even to the veriest unbeliever there was something meant by that name of Christian—something mystical, pure, holy. "There's a Christian for you!" Robison was accustomed to say, when some one, professing to believe, disgraced his profession by a sin; unhappily it was not very uncommon. "Look at your Christian!" said the infidel, exultingly; but no one thought infidelity was disgraced when Charlie Smith broke faith, and Robison wallowed in the coarse dissipation to which he had returned—something even by their own confession and consciousness there was in this name, and they did not understand the involuntary homage they did to it by their very sneers.

"I say, John Drayton!" said George

Harrison, a few days after, when John, greatly ashamed and humbled, had returned to his work, "here's been a job about Robison! did you hear what he's gone and done?"

"No."

"He's stolen a lot of lead from Clinker's, and he's in Kirkdale Gaol for it now."

"Stolen! I don't believe it!" exclaimed John.

"Well, it's true for all that. Clinker would have let him off with paying for it, but Clinker's partner wouldn't, so, sure enough, he's in Kirkdale. Joe, there, saw him taken up."

And it was very true; John's great preceptor and apostle was a thief, found out and proved. Poor John! it was the climax of his miseries.

On his way home at the dinner hour, he

encountered the sceptic's wife. Mrs. Robison was a very respectable person; a careful, frugal, church-going Scotswoman, to whom her husband's infidelity had at first been positive anguish, but who, by long grieving over it, and testifying against it, had come to look upon it at last as an institution—a thing certain and established, which no effort could overthrow. She was dressed in her carefully-kept Sunday's dress, and had a black veil over her face. John stopped to tell her how grieved he was—how he could scarcely believe it.

Her eyes were red with crying, and she looked ashamed and broken down.

"I dinna see why you shouldna believe it. What was to be expected from a man so left to himsel'?"

"But he was always so honourable," said John.

"Ane maun be mair than honourable to resist temptation," said the infidel's wife. "Naebody kens how strong the enemy is till they try him hand to hand; and when there's nae help of God either askit for, or lookit for, or wished for, it's easy enough to see wha maun gang down. It wasna an equal battle, the first time, when Adam, that was pure by nature, met with the Evil Spirit; and I reckon its far frae being mended now, if men will trust to themsels."

"Who would you have us trust to? If a man doesn't trust to himself, he'll do very little, I'm sure," said John.

"Laddie, I would have you trust in God, and in Him that came to deliver," said the woman, sternly, "do I no ken that your blood would be required at my James's hand, if he were called to his account this day?—and mind, I warn ye; ye maun tak him—

he's no sae wise, though he's my ain—for your guide or your counsellor at no hand. What mair do ye think *he* kens than *you* ken? Read your Bible, laddie, and if ye doubt, warstle out your doubts for yoursel, and take no man's word. Mind, I've warned ye. I've freed his soul of your blood. He's plenty to answer for of his ain, without your destruction; and, oh! beware, and take thought before ye be a'thegither left to yoursel, for there's naething in this world sae fruitful as iniquity—the seed o't never dies."

Thick-sown, broad-cast, in those wretched places where last night he had seen Mr. Shafton. A strange interest sprang up in John's mind—to watch the battle go on—to see if the iniquitous seeds could ever be crushed to death.

The evening has come again, and John

stands by Mrs. Wyld's door, thoughtfully looking at the sun. The western wave is all aflame, and yonder gather the clouds, pressing together, like spectators at some great pageant, to see the sun go down; and now he dips and glides away into the blazing sea, and now the clouds, red-tinted, press into his vacant place, and the waves shiver and grow cold; and John thinks how the other hemisphere turns its dewy side to meet the sunrising, and how it is early morning on the Indian seas. The grand and gorgeous sunset here—the hopeful dawning yonder; and how continually, softening and glowing into noon and night, the light comes and goes over the world.

But in the world within it is chaos and darkness—uncertain meteor lights flashing with electric noises, like the northern streamers, across the obscure, far-distant

sky—some faint, pale stars, of human goodness, pointing feebly, dubiously, to a higher light above; but from his own particular vision the higher light veiled out, and nothing certain in the heavens.

Vaguely John thinks and feels. A blank, cold want somewhere—a void which he cannot supply—which no man can supply for him: for John is not a naked intellectual being seeking out abstract intangible truth. He is a man, with a struggling, aspiring, unsatisfied human heart—a warm, affectionate individual human nature; and the First Cause—a God who having created, takes no further heed of the infinite freight of capabilities which he has launched abroad in this vessel of life—is only a name to the solitary unbelieving spirit. He wants something personal—something distinct—something to be vehemently grasped and clung

to; and as he looks round him into the world, and finds nothing but wavering, unsteady humanity, and again and again is flung back upon himself, he only feels the void and blank the more. Himself! he could have made an ideal idol of another man; but he knows the secret of his own soul too well.

Yonder, higher up the hill, David Bruce and his mother are looking out on the setting sun. She is delicate, that little grey-haired old lady, and leans somewhat heavily on her son's arm; and he lifts his hat from his brow, and looks away with radiant eyes into the glowing clouds. The poet face irresistibly fascinates the duller eyes of John. He wonders what that other intelligence thinks, absorbed, as all its faculties seem, in "the glory and the joy" of the evening sky; and insensibly he transfers a shadow of his

own doubt to the high, pure forehead of David Bruce. But the poet is making pictures of those clouds, and lovingly gathering in their fairy colours to his heart, and the shadow melts and floats away over the clear face which will not be clouded. Awe may make it grave, and reverent love may calm its sunshine down, but the simplicity of genius knows no doubting, and the poet believes like a child.

And yonder, along the street at the bottom of the hill, passes Mr. Shafton, with a little roll of books in his hand. He is not going to walk, to look at the sky, to enjoy himself; he thinks the sunset "very pretty," as he looks back at it over his shoulder, and dives away into that narrow street, swarming with vociferous children. Mr. Shafton's mind has not been formed for special converse with the grand

and beautiful, but it has been formed with other gifts, and he has found them out. "Know what thou can'st work at; and work at it like a Hercules;" doing this, Mr. Shafton turns his back on the sunset, and hastens to his ragged school.

And now, by John Drayton's side, at the door of the little house adjoining, another young man stands. He has a clever face, you see, as you look at his dark, quick eyes, and projecting forehead and sallow cheeks. His lips are very thin, and, when they move, move rapidly, and he has a little stiff demonstrative gesture with one hand, which speaks of class-rooms and debating societies. There is a cold, keen force in his eyes, as he, too, looks out to the western sky, and his face throws back the light with a dazzling chill glitter as of polished steel. Rosily the evening sun

tinges David Bruce's cheek, and sinks into his heart; but nothing could carry the hue of warmth or joy to that sallow, clever brow. In his hand he has a little book; you will see it is a Greek Testament, if you look closer, and that this is Thomas Miller, the widow's student son.

They have both said "a fine night," and both have relapsed into silence; and now the student leans upon the little stone pillar at the gate, and opens his book; John looks curiously at it, and asks what it is.

"A Testament — Greek," said young Miller.

Now John did not know much about the Testament, but he assumed that he did, and that he had found it out, and was aware how little dependance was to be put in it; but the unknown tongue awed him,

and, in the chaos of his thoughts, he was willing to come back to this, the simple fountain-head.

"Is it the original?" said John.

"Yes—Syriac Greek—the language the Hebrews wrote in Christ's time," said the student.

The language the Hebrews wrote. "And is there really proof that it's as old as that?" said John.

"Proof! to be sure; the antiquity of the Scripture never was doubted," said young Miller, with a little scorn. "There has been abundant cavilling at its inspiration; but everybody knows its age."

Poor John was silenced; he did not dare to doubt what nobody had doubted before.

"And if a man were anxious to be sure

that it was true," said John, hesitatingly, "is there any way he could find out?"

"Certainly. There are no lack of works on inspiration," said Miller. "No one who wants to study the subject can be at all at a loss."

"But what I want to know is, if it's true?" said John.

"Well, I tell you to study the subject, and then you'll be able to judge for yourself. There's no want of biblical literature now, though there are few English critics of any standing."

"But it's not about critics, I want to know," said John, with more boldness, "nor books on inspiration either. Do you think *that's* inspired? Do you think it's the truth, and comes from God? and is there anything an unlearned man could

get at, that would satisfy him of that?"

"Not any one book, I dare say," said the student, "especially not any popular book; but if you like to set yourself to it, and begin a course of study, you might do. Tell me what your difficulty is, and I'll try to help you."

"It's all difficulty — it's all blank together," said John. "Is there anything true? is it true that there's a God? is the Bible true? and if it is, what is there in it that a man may grasp at and believe?"

"Did you ever read Paley?" said the student.

"No—and it is'nt books that I care for so much," said John, hastily. "Will you tell me—I suppose you've read them

all—will you tell me if you believe that book's true?"

"Yes," said Miller; but a furtive smile of scorn at the question was on his lip, and there was no conviction in his tone. As a thing of course—yes—he believed it; but this was not the satisfaction John sought.

"Yes; I believe it's all true," continued the student, "and much of it inspired. I've no more doubt that everything happened as Matthew and Mark, Luke and John record it, than that I'm alive. I'm not so sure that they were right in their inferences in every case. I don't, you know, quite hold the plenary inspiration. Sometimes they might put another meaning on the words of Jesus than he did himself—but that all his history is perfectly true, I feel sure."

"And do you believe in Him, Himself?" asked John.

"Yes, certainly."

"And what do you think He was?"

A pause followed. Sceptic as he was, John felt a slight thrill of anxiety as he waited, and saw that this was the question of questions—the truth which the world and he wanted alike.

"I believe He was what He calls Himself, the Son of God," said the student.

But there was no awe in his voice—no living human emotion turning towards the living God and man—as of some dead impersonal dogma of the schools, the Christian student spoke of the author of his faith.

"He was before his age, as all great men are," said Miller, "and of course he was rejected, and sacrificed. No one then

came up to the grand ideas he proclaimed. He came only great in intellect and goodness, when they expected a warlike prince; and they did as men have always done—they rejected the hero, and took the common man. But look at the effect of his life; twelve poor men he left to convert the world; men who had nothing but the spiritual contagion—the brave enthusiasm he left to them—and now Christianity—look what it is."

"But what was He?" reiterated the inquirer.

"Jesus of Nazareth—the apostle of love and kindness; the preacher of good tidings—the purest enthusiast—the loftiest genius. That is what I believe he was—the Son of God."

The Son of God—what did it mean?

Were these merely figurative words,

signifying one worthy among men to be adopted by the Eternal Father? Was this great personage, after all, about whom there hung a visionary awe even amid all controversy, no more than a great genius, a lofty, enthusiastic, hero man? But Alfred the old king was that, and so were the Shakespeares and the Luthers, in their differing magnitudes; and no man tried with any name among these names to renovate a world.

But they tried it in the name of Jesus! Simple men went out fearlessly, daring the whole world in the name of Jesus. Mr. Shafton came and went, among the little miserable heirs of vice, in high, smiling, generous hopefulness, to make them men with this name; and was it no more than the name of a hero after all?

To outward appearance John Drayton smiled, and fell back upon his old unbelief; but in his heart felt the chaos gather yet more bitterly. This student was to be a Christian minister by and bye, yet thus he spoke of Him, from whom his faith was named; and again John groped and saw nothing. The future Evangelist directed him nowhither; and where was the lever which was to raise the world?

CHAPTER XII.

It was October now, and the nights were growing cold, so Rachel had her candle on the little round table and sat by the fireside when there was daylight no longer. Mrs. Wyld, in the corner, is making the skirt of a light coloured gown, for her eyes are failing a little, and she cannot help Rachel with those mourning dresses at night; and the mourning is nearly finished now. Rachel is very busy

with the crape trimming, that must decorate them, and they will be completed to-night.

Brightly the little fire is burning. Mrs. Wyld's feet are on the polished fender, as she bends forward to the single candle, and complains now and then of her old eyes; and Rachel's fingers move very nimbly, and look very white, glancing through the transparent crape as she plaits and twists it for her "trimming." They are happier than usual to-night, and quieter, though no one knows why, and John, when he comes in, dark and dissatisfied as he is, lingers behind Rachel's chair and admires how swiftly the shining needles move, and thinks such a little home as this might be very happy—very happy; but first some revelation must come from the heavens to him.

For long he has doubted and disbelieved,

and been a scornful scoffing sceptic. It is very different now. He thinks he was a boy then, when he could mingle levity with his unbelief, but now it is life or death; the world's, and his own individual fate, press upon him, and somewhere—somewhere, he fancies, must be the master key which shall tune their jarring chords into harmony; somewhere—if he could but find it—and find it he must, or the very heart within him will die.

But Rachel lays down her trimming and leaves the room, returning in a few minutes with two of the white paper-covered books. She smiles as she lays them down at John's hand, and tells him he must read the story of "Margaret" aloud, after he has finished the "Dream."

And John opens the uppermost book, and

sitting by the table reads the "Dream." Strange, thrilling, ghostly—he almost cries aloud as these words realize for him his own confused, forlorn, desolate thoughts—the universe without God; but he has not attained yet to the happy awakening of Jean Paul; and no one sings the Easter Hymn, "The Lord is risen," in the ears of the lonely yearning sceptic who longs to believe it true.

There is a knock at the door; a pretentious knock not without authority—and Mrs. Wyld rises and takes away the candle to answer it. The visitors are for Mrs. Taylor in the parlour, whose husband is a Scotsman, as one half of the engineers in the foundry are, and who goes to the Scotch church. The gentlemen who have called are connected with the church, Mrs. Wyld

says, as she sets down the candle and takes up her work; and John resumes his reading.

But he has not made much progress in the story of "Margaret," and Mrs. Wyld has only for the fifth or sixth time wiped her eyes and her spectacles, when Mrs. Taylor looks in at the door.

"The gentlemen have come about the church, Mrs. Wyld," said Mrs. Taylor, "and they want to find out where the people go to, about here—would you have any objection to let them come in?"

Mrs. Wyld had no objections. She put away the skirt of the light-coloured gown, which, indeed, had been making very little progress for the last half hour, and bustled about to set chairs for the gentlemen as they came in.

One of them is a heavy old man, with a

great expanse of face, and wide, marled eyes. He has a hazy look, and speaks condescendingly. His name is Mr. Maclean, and he lives higher up the hill in Lancaster Terrace, where there still linger a few boarding-schools, and houses of gentility. Beggars all and sundry know his door, and his benevolent Lady-Bountiful wife makes soup in hard winters, and is a sort of funded property for all impostors; for Mrs. Maclean, good woman, has a knack of discouraging and suspecting the decent, struggling, sturdy poverty she sometimes sees, but will do anything to reclaim a clever impostor, who has a good story to tell.

With Mr. Maclean is a very humble, patronized person, who takes notes in a little book, and is very greatly gratified, as it seems, by the august company in which he itinerates.

"And what church do you go to, Mrs. Wyld?" said Mr. Maclean, benignly.

"To St. Paul's, at the foot of the street, please Sir," said Mrs. Wyld; and the humble man took her answer down.

"Oh! Mr. Winter's an excellent man," said Mr. Maclean; "I should expect him to be the means of doing something in this district. It's a great district, Mrs. Wyld—a great deal might be done here. No doubt, the people are poor, but I have known poor men eminent Christians. Not many wise—not many noble are called. I often think of that when I go through these streets."

John Drayton pushed back his chair in audible indignation.

"Not many wise—not many noble," and how was this good, stolid man, who was neither the one nor the other to distinguish

whether there were noble and wise in those streets.

"And do you go pretty regularly to church?" continued the bland Mr. Maclean.

"As regular as I can, Sir; mostly every Sunday," said Mrs. Wyld.

"That's right," said the good man; "and this is your daughter, and this—is this your son, Mrs. Wyld?"

"No," said John bluntly; "I only lodge here."

"And do you go to Mr. Winter's, my young friend?"

"I don't go anywhere," said John; for John was angry, and in his young strength and impatient intelligence, could not tolerate the condescension of the great hazy unintellectual face.

"I am very sorry to hear that," said Mr. Maclean; "you couldn't be anywhere on the Sabbath-day so well as at church, I'm sure. Won't you try? To have the Bible explained and opened up is a great privilege, you know; and I have no doubt Mr. Winter will break the bread small for babes. There are many things you can't understand, perhaps, and don't you think it would be pleasant to have them explained to you? There is myself, now—I have had a great many advantages that nobody would expect you to have in your position; but I have been troubled with a hard text even myself, and got it explained in a sermon. Now you know Mr. Winter knows that his congregation are mostly poor, and I have no doubt—he's a sensible young man—that he brings his sermons down to their capacity."

There was something in all this unspeak-

ably galling to the young intellectualist; this benign condescension to his working-man capacity; this promised dilution of the things hard to be understood, which the obtuse man, by right of his "position," fancied himself so much better qualified to comprehend than John. It was very well meant, and the man was a good man, but in this case he was perpretating a great blunder—a blunder unhappily too common with religious men.

"I can understand as much as I want to understand," said John, with an air of defiance. "I can understand where one place contradicts another well enough; it's not difficult to find *that* out, and I would like to hear any one explain it."

"Do you not believe the Bible?" asked the good man.

And John, who in his inmost heart longed

to believe it, denied his own yearning in a burst of irritation.

"No, I don't."

"It is because it condemns your depraved life, young man; you tremble when you think of God the judge, and so you attempt to deny Him," said Mr. Maclean, severely.

But it had not dawned upon John's soul, that awful presence, the judging, condemning God. This, he fancied, he would be almost solemnly glad to recognize, so long as it brought before him, the grand sovereign living power, in this lawless world. And John's life was not depraved—so again the good man's arrow glanced aside, and instead of striking through these mists to the heart within the sceptic's agitated breast, only grazed and galled him as it passed.

"Are you not afraid of his vengeance

coming upon you, if you reject His word?" said Mr. Maclean.

"I would if I knew it was his word," said John, blinded with anger:—"but suppose I took up a book—a history say, and found that it said one thing in one place, and just the contrary in another, do you think I'd put any faith in it? and there's that in the Bible."

"You don't understand it—that's it; you need to have it explained to you," said Mr. Maclean, "tell me some of the contradictions and I'll make them clear."

And John, thoroughly irritated, exhausted his ingenuity in reproducing some of the old objections of Robison, and Mr. Maclean hotly attacked them in detail. The good man's strength did not lie in argument; his intellect was dim and obtuse, so much as he had of it, and his tools lay out of

the way, where he could not lay his hands on them, as commonly happens to those who have not the gift of handling their tools; but John had been trained, was alert and ready; so the old result followed. The Christian champion got himself into a false position, sputtered, stammered, broke down; his companion came to his aid, only to entangle him more grievously; and the clever sceptic came triumphantly out of the tilt, flushed with the excitement of a well defended argument, and for the moment reconciled to his old creed again.

In horror and pity, Mr. Maclean concluded at last. He had done what he could, he thought; he had testified against the evil, and defended the truth, and, with the air of a saint, he rose to shake the dust from off his feet as a witness against the deceived youth, whom he had exasperated against all

religion. Yet, had they but known—could they but have looked on each other's hearts, as they did with defiance in each other's faces, what different results might have followed; for this man believed—underneath all superficial evils of manner and temper, the Divine faith, which John Drayton longed if it were but to see, was in this man's heart—and half a dozen simple living words of faith would have melted the unbeliever into very tears.

Mr. Maclean lifted the book which lay open on the table; but Mr. Maclean did not know the story of Margaret, and was contemptuous. Jean Paul's Dream lay open too. He glanced at it; there was something profane in its convolutions of words.

"I heard some one reading aloud when I came in," said the good man, severely. "Mrs. Wyld, I hope you don't let this

unhappy young man poison your daughter's mind by his miserable books. Take care; you don't know what you expose her to."

"The book is not his; I got it for him," said Rachel.

"I see Richter—that's one of the German rationalists, I think. I see his name at this," said Mr. Maclean, "and *you* got it! You, so young, and a woman! Could you not have got him a good book instead?"

"It is not a bad book," said Rachel. "I got it for good: indeed, it is not a bad book."

"My poor girl, how can *you* know; it's not to be expected you should know," said Mr. Maclean. "*I* see how dangerous it is; and, beware of yourself, for there's nothing so deceitful as the human heart—there's nothing too bad for our evil nature. I take no credit to myself for being more en-

lightened. Not unto us—not unto us—but if you're wise, Mrs. Wyld, you'll not let such a dangerous neighbour remain under your roof another day."

And so severely, and with dignity, Mr. Maclean left the house.

He was a very well-meaning man, and all that he had said was true; yet, certainly the effect of his visit was anything but satisfactory. John paced up and down the kitchen, irritated and provoked, angry at himself, at all the world, and confirmed in all the sceptical scorn of religion and religious men, which had begun to melt and pass away. Rachel, bending her pale face over her work, shook and shivered, and had much ado to keep down her tears; and Mrs. Wyld, with her sewing lying on her knee, looked vacantly into the fire.

The fire was getting low, too; a shadow

had fallen upon the little house. There lay the sad story of the poet—there the wild, terrible desolation of the dreamer's vision; but John had forgotten, for the moment, everything but anger, and his good impressions had vanished in its heat and flame.

And Mrs. Wyld sat dubiously looking into the fire. Their visitor's words haunted her—an infidel—a denier of God; and what if God visited their house with judgment.

"John—John."

There was a soothing power in Rachel's melancholy voice. He took his chair again, and sat down.

"Well?"

"I don't know what to say to you, John; you're very wrong—you're keeping away happiness from yourself—you'll never have

rest nor peace as long as you think that way."

"Well, let them convince me that I'm wrong," said John.

"It's yourself that will suffer—it's nobody else," said Rachel. "What good is it to do any one, to come and force the gospel on you? If you don't want it, you won't believe, whatever any one says. John, you must seek it for yourself, or you'll never find it."

He looked at her sadly, and at the open book lying before him, and his anger began to pass away. "I do want it—I'd believe it if I could—I'd believe anything that looked as if it came from God; but will you tell me it comes from God, when not one that believes in it cares for it, more than I do for that book. Rachel! I'd answer surer for anything you said, than they would answer

for what's in their Bible—I'd have greater faith in you than they have in their God."

"And what are other men to you, John Drayton," said Rachel, "you don't blind your eyes and go about and ask the people you meet if the sun's shining; you look yourself and see—and if you don't look yourself, with your own eyes, as if there never was another man in the world, and the Bible was written for you, like a letter with your own name upon it, you'll never see. John, I don't want to speak of myself, but I *know* it's true. It's not thinking—it's not wishing—it's certain and sure; and I'd part with everything in this world sooner than I'd part with Him."

"With whom?"

Her pale face was deeply flushed—her figure trembling like a leaf. "Him—there

is but one—Hush, I know—Him that died at Jerusalem—the Lord !"

The sceptic did not say a word—something moved those frozen chains about his heart, but he strained his eyes and could not see. This story of Jesus was but a myth, some of his books said—He was a great genius, a lofty enthusiast said the Christian student; and no one but this girl had he seen cling to the wonderful grand mysterious Being, who, strangely indeed if he were but like other men, stood forth, to the consciousness of believer and unbeliever alike, the central figure of the world.

"Not many wise—not many noble," said John, after a long pause; and even then his own voice sounded harsh and mean to him after poor Rachel's confession of faith—"that's a nice way to come and conciliate

men. Does he think himself wise I wonder—or what is he that he should look down upon us?"

"He was shocked at you, John," said Mrs. Wyld with a sigh—"and I'm not surprised. If I was your mother I'd break my heart; but my George, bless him, reads his Bible every night out yonder upon the sea, Would you trust yourself on the sea, John, with these thoughts of yours?"

And a fancy came into John's mind—to carry away these thoughts of his, so restless, and forlorn, and wistful, away towards the setting sun; into new countries—over dark contending seas—to go forth and seek God.

Anywhere, so he could still bandage his eyes, and ask of other men. Anywhere so he could elude the personal *look* by which alone he might see the sun—any-

where far away, where miracles might linger still; but in his little room, carefully covered up, lay the great treasure of revelation—the divine book in its human garments, like to the Divine Man, pictured visibly in it, whom he must see for himself, and not another. But still with blind hands John groped and stumbled, feeling only upon his heart for a blessed moment now and then, when Rachel spoke to him, the warmth of that sun shining in the broad heavens, which yet he could not see.

CHAPTER XIII.

"JOHN, my good lad—or, rather, John, my bad lad, for you're to be blamed," said Joseph Davies, the Welshman, who lived in the little street above, and who was David Bruce's landlord, as he joined John one afternoon, after dinner, on the way to the foundry; "why don't you never go to chapell?"

"Because I'd get no good," said John.

"And how do you know you'd get no good?" said the Welchman. "More clever men than you have got good when they didn't think of it; and now I mind, isn't it a good thing that most all the great people—the great men, I mean, that have written books, and done things worth remembering—why they've all gone to chapell, and been believers!"

"Do you mean they've all been Dissenters?" said John with an incipient sneer.

"Not a bit—it's all one — for we preach very near the same thing at chapell as they do in the church;" said Joseph, "and that's why the people are all such decent people in Wales. There never is rows in Wales, like in Ireland and other heathen places, for in my country everybody goes to chapell."

"I'd like to see a congregation in the open air, where everybody preaches all round in Welsh, as you say they do," said John.

But the good Joseph was unmoved. "Ay, that's all your fun;" he said, "but if you did once see them at Bala, I'll promise you'd never forget. Maybe a bright summer day, and all the winds quiet about the hills, and the people coming in like streams of water, one river after another; the old ones and the girls in the carts, and the lads walking—if it were a dozen miles—and out with the stools out of the cart for the father and mother, and down on the fresh grass themselves (you'd never see such grass here, with bits of thyme in it to make it sweet); and then the hymn—thousands and thousands of them singing it, and all in sweet Welsh, and it rising right up

into Heaven, and every one so happy. You'd never forget it, if you once saw them at Bala."

And the beauty of the picture moved John. He fancied that if he indeed saw such a scene it would almost make him believe.

"So like a good lad go to chapell, John, or to church, it's all one," said Joseph. "You don't, know — it's so pleasant. To wake up on the Sabbath morning, and go away through the bells ringing, with the children and the mother, all fresh and in their good dress, to hear some one who knows Him, preach about the Lord. You'll easy find when a man knows Him—it'll be seen in the sermon, John; and if He is not in the sermon, however good the words be, don't go back there at night. You try what I say, and tell me this day twelvemonth

whether it isn't the best thing you ever did in your life."

But John's tongue clove to his mouth. The good man's simple, undoubting faith, shut the unbeliever's lips. He could not for his life have asserted that to be untrue, of which the Christian spoke as of the sun in the sky—certain, evident, known—the truth of truths.

"Did you ever see my books, John?" said the good Joseph, with a little pride. "Come up to-night and I'll show you them, will you? Mr. Bruce—now there's a young man for you—and goes to his chapell regular as ever Sunday comes—Mr. Bruce says it's quite a good library, and I've just picked it up one book at a time. Come up to-night and I'll show them to you—and go to chapell, do."

John made no promise about going to

chapel, but very willingly that evening he went to Joseph's house. It was a little larger than Mrs. Wyld's, and had a room on each side of the door—very little parlours each of them. The right hand one was the sitting-room of David Bruce and his mother, the left hand one was Joseph's own *sanctum sanctorum*—the best parlour—the pride of Mrs. Davies' heart. Behind this was a sort of better kitchen in which the family lived; and there was a rather scanty supply of bedrooms upstairs.

But John is taken into the best parlour by Master Owen Rhys Davies, who has a lump of bread and butter in his hand; and a gentle noise of cups and saucers from the back, confirms the *vivâ voce* explanation of Owen Rhys, that Joseph and his family are at tea. The best parlour is very small, and Owen Rhys has to draw up the Venetian

blind before you can see the room distinctly; there is a little table in the middle covered with oil-cloth, and a little hair-cloth sofa by the wall, and half a dozen slim cane chairs; but there in the recesses on each side of the fireplace—there are the treasures of Joseph Davies.

Each of the recesses is closely shelved from the floor to the roof, and every shelf is crammed with books; some of these, as John examines curiously, appear to him in blue paper boards, and very rough at the edges, reprints of the last century; but some are glorious tall folios, and precious original editions are there, worth their weight in silver at the least. Unknown names, Hooker and Tillotson, Caryl and Flavel, appear on the old books; and here are more recent octavos, with names of Charles of Bala, and Rowland, and Christmas Evans,

which to John are as strange. Some of them he opens; and lo! embalmed in one lies a pet objection of John's own, to the truth of the Scriptures peacefully buried and dead; and here is another—a grave, learned, famous book; two hundred years' old, and more—commenting on a chapter of that same Bible, verse by verse, and word for word, as if every syllable was weighty. A kind of awe came upon the sceptic. Hundreds of years ago, painstaking, wise, renowned men were examining the Scripture thus: lovingly spending lives-long over it, expounding, defending, always believing, clinging to it as to dearest life. Labours of centuries were clustering round it—all too little to lay at the feet of the Divine Word—yet now in these latter days, small, uneducated men, like himself, put it aside, and treated it like a detected lie. A blush came burning over

the face of John; he felt himself humbled by his very pride.

Joseph Davies is by no means rich. His wealthy brother has a draper's shop "down town," and Joseph sits on a high stool there, in a little den railed in by wooden railings, and is called "Cashier." But to be cashier in the establishment of Benjamin Davies is by no means a lucrative thing; and Joseph wants the genius for making money. Had he possessed it, those recesses, in all likelihood, would not have been so well filled with books. But Mrs. Davies is very thrifty, and Owen Rhys already has attained to a place behind the counter, and vouches for calicoes with a precocious wisdom, which makes his mother admire and wonder; so they "get on" pretty well. And Joseph preaches in the smaller chapels sometimes, and is universally looked up to by the

humble people, to whom, like an Apostle, as he is, he preaches the simple Gospel with unwavering faith. For the Gospel is daylight full and broad to the soul of Joseph, and when men tell him there is no sun in the heavens, he passes on unmoved in his simplicity, with a smile, for he *sees* the sun.

"This I gave but a shilling for," said Joseph, "but I wouldn't part with it for five pounds; for look you here, John—but maybe you don't see any value in that?"

"No," said John, honestly.

"It's because you don't know; look you, it's the original edition, 'Imprynted at the Elephant in Cornhill, 1574,' three hundred years; near three hundred years old; and it's as good as it was the first year."

"All your books are of one kind," said John.

"Yes sure; they're all religious books. I've got some commentaries that Mr. Hughes, of St. David's, would give me ten pounds for; but I tell him he's welcome to come here and read. I'd as soon sell little Morgan John as sell my commentaries."

"And don't you ever get any new books?" said John.

"Look you here," said Joseph: "not that you could make any good of it, you know—for none of your Englishmen are learned—you don't know Welsh; here's the report of the Bible Society. You'd think we were but poor people, to look at us in chapell; but we can give our hundreds a year cheerful for that."

"For what?" said John.

"For the Word; to get it cheap printed, and send it out where it isn't known. They

give—you wouldn't believe what the Welsh Auxiliary gives for that."

"Why, people say you're all misers, and as hard as can be," said John.

"Well, we're not wasteful," said the Welshman; "we're careful people. If I had been spending money without thought, do you think I'd ever have got these books? but we can spare on ourselves, thanks be to God, when we won't spare on His cause."

But not a word of doubt said John; his lips were closed.

"If I was a young man, I think, I'd go abroad," said Joseph, "and be a missionary to the poor heathen. I never think of them, but my heart burns; that there should be light in the world, and whole tribes of men and women still in darkness."

"If there's light in the world, there's plenty of men and women still in darkness, more than the heathen," said John.

"And so there is, that's true," answered the Welshman; "but don't you let down your heart. There's the Church wakening up hereabout, and sending out good men. I know Mr. Jones myself—him that's got the new church down near the foundry. He's as good a man as ever lived, and would spend his life for his people. And we're doing all we can to keep up the cause in Wales. You don't often see Welsh people but they go regularly to chapell; and the new Scotch Church is looking after the Scotsmen *I* know. So don't let down your heart, John, when men's working and God's ruling. Wait and see what it will be in ten years after this, if you're spared; and if it's no better then, wait longer, and work all you

can to help. Ay, sure! for the Word shall be in every street here, and in every corner of the earth, when it's God's time."

"And how can you tell that?" said John.

"Because there's to be a time," said the simple preacher, "when we shall not need to teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord;' and don't you see what's implied in that, John?—that there is to be a time when every man *will* teach his neighbour—and that's not come yet. So there's two times to look for: the first one when we're all exhorting our brethren to know the Lord; and the second, when we don't need to teach any more, for all shall know Him, from the least of them to the greatest of them. It's coming, John—maybe we may think it slow, but every day it's coming; just as the spring days are often cold, and there's wind and rain, and

all that, but yet summer's on the road. So it's coming on every day; for you'll see men beginning already to teach every man his brother, and it'll go on and on, till He comes the second time with His crown—Him that once bore the cross—and we'll be there to see—ay, if it be thousands and thousands of years off—we'll be there to see!"

And already the good man saw the Jesus—the Saviour—the King—closing in solemn triumph the wondrous story of this earth; but the sceptic was mute; for room for cavilling there here was none.

"Have you got any books on—on what you call the Evidences," said John, with a little abruptness after a pause. He had picked up the word from the student Miller.

"The evidences? yes, sure — here's na-

tural theology, and here's—lots," said Joseph, "and Mr. Bruce has got the great Scotchman, Dr. Chalmers. My library's all solid, but his—he's only a young man like yourself you know, and he's got a pretty little lot of books—but it's a queer mixture—an odd mixture—any way he has Chalmers; and I have—yes sure, I've quite a good collection of apologetic literature."

"Apologetic? but I don't want apologies—it's evidence," said John.

"That's what we call it—it's all one," said the Welshman. "Look you here, and here. Owen Rhys, bring me the step-ladder. I've got a whole shelf ful up there."

"Will you lend me some?" said John.

"Lend you some?" the good Welshman looked a little afraid. "What do *you* want with reading the Evidences."

"Because I want to know. I want to be convinced," said John, with a husky eager voice, "will you lend me some?"

Joseph did not at all like lending. "You'd be welcome to come and read them here;" he said with some hesitation, "but after all, you're steady, John Drayton; would you take particular care if I did lend you one?"

"I'd be as careful as if it were gold," said John.

"But John, my good lad it's more than gold; gold might lie about anywhere, and if it was not stolen, it was none the worse—but the books—people get hold of them with dirty hands, and fold down the leaves, and pull the boards away. If I give you this one," and Joseph eyed a blue boarded quarto as affectionately as he could have looked upon little Morgan John, "if I give

you this one will you take particular care, and bring it home in a week?"

John promised and received the book. "On the Evidences of Christianity—" with a little thrill of excited expectation he read the title.

"You're to step in and see Mr. Bruce before you go away," said Joseph. "Knock at the door, Owen Rhys, and say John Drayton is come. Look you here, John. There's a pretty book—it's William David's last prize—I think that boy will turn out something; he's very clever, if he be good as well, and please God, we'll make a preacher of him. Now there's Mr. Bruce looking for you; mind you bring up the book next week. Good night, John."

David Bruce stands at the other parlour door, on the opposite side of the lobby, pulling the black locks of little Morgan

John, the Welshman's youngest child, and smiling over to John Drayton. It is only a step, and out of Joseph Davies' best parlour, John stands in the sitting-room of Mrs. Bruce.

The little old lady sits there, by the side of a little bright fire, sewing. She is constantly sewing; and it is a fine linen collar she is elaborately stitching now, while the less ornamental parts of the shirt, to which it belongs, lie in a bundle on the table by her side. Mrs. Bruce is continually making shirts, and her landlady, with quick feminine eyes, guesses that they are not all for David; but David himself, when he jokes his mother about her never-failing occupation, and listens to her "Hout, laddie, it's because I'm old, and canna get them out of my hands," does never once suspect that the shirts are other than his own, or

that his mother laboriously *earns* those miraculous crown pieces, which now and then she slips into his hand to buy a new book.

Precious already are the books so bought, and more precious they will be hereafter.

Mrs. Bruce wears a black silk gown, very carefully preserved, very old—older than William David, who is winning prizes at school—and a cap of white net, carefully and closely plaited about her little, clear, happy face. Below the cap her hair is silvery grey, but her eyes are as clear as hazel eyes are at eighteen, and look as blythe and life-loving, and her little brisk hands move merrily about the linen. It charms you like a pleasant song, to look at her fair old age.

On the table lies a book—a book which David has just bought with one of his

mother's miraculous crowns. It is still damp and new, and he has been reading aloud to her some verses, which she thinks might be very fine if she could make them out; and some others, so very true, so very beautiful in their deep grasp of grief, that her eyes have just been freshened with tears, and her thoughts have been away with the dead.

A little bashfully John Drayton comes in. He had an audience of Mr. Hardman once in his dining-room, and has spoken face to face with the Secretary of the Mechanics' Institution, in his learned study; but never before had he entered such a home as this.

END OF VOL. I.

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